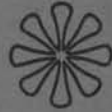


VI.A Settlement of the Conflict (6 Vols.)
Negotiations, 1965-67: The Public Record

TOP SECRET - SENSITIVE



UNITED STATES - VIETNAM RELATIONS

1945 - 1967



==== VIETNAM TASK FORCE =====

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

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TOP SECRET - SENSITIVE

PART VI.A.

NEGOTIATIONS 1965 - 1967:

THE PUBLIC RECORD

Sec Def Cont Nr. X-0295

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1. Public Statements

1. PUBLIC ATTEMPTS TOWARD A NEGOTIATED END
TO CONFLICT IN VIETNAM

November 1963: FRANCE proposed talks leading toward the establishment of a neutral, independent South Vietnam. According to the New York Times of 9 March 1965, Hanoi was then willing to discuss the establishment of a coalition, neutralist government in Saigon. But the US rejection of de Gaulle's proposal is as understandable as Hanoi's interest. Diem had just been assassinated, the political and military situations were chaotic.

20 May 1964: FRANCE proposed the 14-nation Laos Peace Conference of 1962 be reconvened in Geneva to discuss events in Southeast Asia. The US and UK turned down this offer; Russia, Poland, Cambodia, India and Communist China accepted.

May 1964: THE UN SECURITY COUNCIL considered a Cambodian complaint of South Vietnamese armed incursions into Cambodian territory. The United States and South Vietnam suggested a UN-sponsored peacekeeping or observation group be created to stabilize conditions in the border area. A Mission of the Security Council visited Cambodia and South Vietnam and reported such a group might prove useful. Hanoi and Peking condemned this UN involvement in the Vietnam situation.

July 1964: U THANT called for reconvention of the 1954 Geneva Conference. The US declined to participate.

August 1964: THE UN SECURITY COUNCIL, spurred and supported by the US, invited Hanoi to join in discussions of the Gulf of Tonkin incident and/or other matters. North Vietnam's foreign minister restated his government's position that the UN had no competence to deal with the Vietnam situation and said any decisions taken by the Council would be considered "null and void."

September 1964

NORTH VIETNAM relayed an offer through U THANT to meet with US officials in Rangoon to discuss ways of ending hostilities in South Vietnam. The US waited until late November -- after the presidential elections -- to reject the offer.

U THANT continued to try to arrange a cease-fire on any terms the US might want to propose (including extension of a truce line through both Vietnam and Laos). The Administration did not pick up this offer.^{1/}

ERIC SEVAREID commented on these peace feelers on 28 July 1965 (CBS Radio London) and again in Look Magazine, 15 November 1965. The New York Herald Tribune of 10 August 1965 also speculated on the story. Official acknowledgement did not come until 17 November at a press conference. State Department spokesman Robert McCloskey said we had refused to talk with Hanoi because "we did not believe North Vietnam was prepared for serious talks." Dean Rusk elaborated on this a week later during a 26 November news conference. Mr. Rusk explained that in the autumn of 1964, it seemed clear "beyond a peradventure of doubt that Hanoi was not prepared to discuss peace in Southeast Asia based upon the agreements of 1954 and 1962 and looking toward the lifting of aggression against South Vietnam."

February 1965

INDIAN PRESIDENT SHASTRI asked Russian and American leaders to discuss the problems of Southeast Asia; the Indian foreign ministry suggested the Geneva Conference be reconvened.

PRESIDENT DE GAULLE, reportedly at Hanoi's urging, suggested a new Geneva Meeting to discuss the future of both Southeast Asia and the United Nations. The Soviet Union and Bulgaria supported the French idea; there were indications of Communist China's willingness to attend such a conference. (Yet on 19 February, Chen Yi reportedly said there would be no negotiations until the US withdrew from South Vietnam; he ridiculed the US insistence that a cease-fire come first.)

HANOI said (25 February 1965) negotiations would be considered if American troops were withdrawn from South Vietnam. (Drew Middleton reported US withdrawal was not a prerequisite to talks if eventual evacuation of US military forces from South Vietnam would be stipulated in a final settlement. [New York Times, March 1965])

The US suggested the French had been given no mandate to act as mediator and said it was not interested in a return to the conference table at this time. The New York Times (17 February) reported both President Johnson and Vice President Humphrey publicly indicated they

^{1/} According to UN sources, the US did not see an active role for U Thant until 1965, when Assistant Secretary H. Cleveland suggested his "good offices" be used to secure a settlement.

saw no alternative now but to support South Vietnam militarily. Officials' private reply to appeals for negotiations was "when and with whom?"

U THANT called for international negotiations on Vietnam, within or without the UN; he suggested preliminaries to a Geneva-style Conference might include "interlinked dialogues" among those directly involved in the war or an informal, seven-nation conference of the US, USSR, Britain, France, Communist China, North and South Vietnam (or, all 1954 Geneva participants except Laos and Cambodia).

Initial US response was negative. The White House said there were "no authorized negotiations underway with Mr. Thant or any other government" (New York Times, 25 February 1965). Dean Rusk said the US would agree to no conference until after North Vietnam stopped sending men and arms into South Vietnam; he insisted a peace settlement had to ensure the "security and independence" of South Vietnam. (Press Conference, 25 February 1965).^{2/}

On 10 March the US formally rejected U Thant's repeated proposal for a seven-power conference insisting there could be no negotiations until North Vietnamese aggression stopped. SOUTH VIETNAM deferred a direct answer, asking U Thant for clarification.

North Vietnam first apparently notified U Thant that it would be receptive to informal negotiations, then showed little interest in the proposal. The National Liberation Front refused to negotiate as long as US forces remained in South Vietnam (New York Times, 9 March 1965).

The military situation in South Vietnam continued to deteriorate in February and March 1965. On 7 February, guerrillas attacked an American outpost at Pleiku, killing eight men and wounding 62. This was followed by Viet Cong raids on a military barracks at Qui Nhon, villages, government buildings, roads. Terrorism in rural and urban areas increased. The US retaliated to Pleiku as it had to the Tonkin Gulf incident by bombing military targets in North Vietnam. It was announced that limited air attacks against northern military installations would continue. Adlai Stevenson explained the objectives of the

^{2/} On 29 February, the State Department white paper "Aggression from the North" was published, documenting Hanoi's control and support of the National Liberation Front, infiltration of North Vietnamese Army regulars into South Vietnam - some 400 NVA troops were said to be part of the 140,000 estimated enemy force - and other evidence of foreign aggression.

bombing in a 7 February letter to the President of the UN Security Council to "arrest reinforcement of the Viet Cong by infiltrators from North Vietnam, to bolster the morale of the South Vietnamese and support their war effort, to resist systematic and continuing aggression, to help bring about a negotiated settlement to the conflict."

On 6 March, two Marine Corps battalions (3,500 men) were sent to South Vietnam for a "limited" support mission. North Vietnam called Marine Corps landings and bombings in the North an open declaration of war.

Peking (13 March 1965) said the deployment of more US troops blocked a political settlement to the Vietnam situation, charged the US planned a "Korea-type" war and said China was not afraid of any US bombing of her land. Jenmin Jih Pao (People's Daily) called the ICC an instrument of the US. Five days later, the newspaper called US talk of peaceful settlement "flagrant shameless blackmail" and said North Vietnam would not be bullied. The Chinese position that US troops must withdraw prior to talks was emphasized.

March 1965

POLAND, CANADA and INDIA called for an expanded international peace-keeping agency. They made no headway.

PRESIDENT JOHNSON, at a 13 March press conference, barred negotiations until North Vietnam halted aggression and said there had been no such sign to date. He conceded a change in US strategy and tactics, but not in basic policy.

PAKISTANI PRESIDENT AYUB KHAN visited Peking (4-8 March) and urged Chinese leaders to accept a negotiated settlement. He made no progress.

On 17 March, Foreign Ministers GROMYKO and STEWART met in London to discuss a UK appeal of 20 February that Britain and the USSR work together as Geneva Co-Chairmen to find a common ground for negotiations. The US supported the British proposal; for some weeks it appeared that Russia would agree to it. But in April, Stewart announced the UK alone would canvass opinions of countries represented at Geneva because the USSR had declined to participate. Moscow felt it was not her position to arrange an international conference and as long as US air attacks on North Vietnam continued, any conference would be impossible anyway.

Communist China (6 April) rebuffed the UK effort, attacked Britain's "dirty role as an accomplice of US aggression" and renewed her opposition to any talks before the US had pulled out of South Vietnam.^{3/}

April 1965

On 1 April, diplomats of unnamed NON-ALIGNED NATIONS reported the DRV had indicated a willingness to agree to a new Geneva Conference without demanding prior withdrawal of US troops or other pre-conditions. They reported the North Vietnamese felt bombing attacks damaged their prestige and had to be answered by counter-blows (apparently in South Vietnam). The report indicated Hanoi wanted to avoid direct USSR or Chinese intervention on their soil and said the Russian offer of volunteers had been turned down.

LABOUR MP WILLIAM WARBEY, in a letter to The Times of London, 1 April 1965, reported on a March meeting with Ho Chi Minh and Pham Van Dong. Warbey said they indicated only one pre-condition to negotiations on which North Vietnam would insist: cessation of the bombing. He said Hanoi seemed willing to accept an autonomous regime in South Vietnam if it "genuinely represents all major sections of the southern population," and that both governments should have the right to "enjoy economic, cultural and fraternal relations" with countries of their own choice.

PRESIDENT JOHNSON said the US had no information that North Vietnam was "ready and willing" to negotiate under "productive conditions"; he said bombing would continue and stressed US eagerness for an honorable settlement.

^{3/} Jenmin Jih Pao announced on 25 March that Communist China was ready to intervene with men and material if the Viet Cong wanted it, said the USSR would not be allowed to demonstrate more militancy than China and charged the US could not stop the South Vietnamese from fighting by escalating the war. (A Brezhnev statement of 24 March that the Soviet Union would send volunteers to Vietnam probably inspired Peking's blast.) The next day, Chou En-lai rejected de Gaulle's February call for a five-power Paris Conference and repeated his warning that intensification of the war could not force North and South Vietnam into negotiations. Chou said the US was violating the Geneva agreements and felt Britain and the USSR should ask the US to halt aggression. In a subsequent statement reportedly delivered to U Thant by Algerian diplomat Bouattoura, Chou said the US must talk directly with the NLF, not with Communist China or North Vietnam.

17 NON-ALIGNED NATIONS meeting in Belgrade appealed for a peaceful solution in Vietnam through negotiations without pre-conditions (1 April).

The US (8 April) welcomed the appeal, expressed agreement with the principles and readiness "for unconditional discussions." The US note went on to say the war should end by ensuring the independence of South Vietnam, that the "basic cause of the conflict...is the attack by North Vietnam on the independent nation of South Vietnam," that we "seek only the security and peace of South Vietnam and we threaten no regime" in "answering the plea of South Vietnam" for assistance.

Hanoi rejected the 17-nation appeal on 20 April, terming inappropriate any approach other than one based on the Four Points enunciated by Premier Pham Van Dong on 8 April. Demands for US withdrawal and enactment of the NLF program of internal affairs were repeated.^{4/}

PRESIDENT JOHNSON first made public the US negotiating position in a 7 April speech at Johns Hopkins University. The Administration's attitude toward negotiations had been private until this time -- the official policy stance had been "secret."^{2/} President Johnson's statement included these points:

-- The "first reality" is that "North Vietnam has attacked the

^{4/} Pham Van Dong did not clearly demand prior US withdrawal nor recognition of the NLF. He did demand recognition of the NLF Program, a broad call for civil rights independence, freedom, neutrality and so on.

The DRV Four Points:

1. The basic rights of the Vietnamese people to peace, independence, unity and territorial integrity must be recognized; the US must withdraw troops, dismantle all military bases in South Vietnam and cease acts of war against North Vietnam;
2. Pending the peaceful reunification of Vietnam and while the country is still temporarily divided into two zones, military provisions of the 1954 Geneva agreements must be strictly respected. Thus there can be no foreign military bases, troops or military personnel in either North or South Vietnam.
3. The internal affairs of South Vietnam must be settled by the South Vietnamese people themselves in accordance with the program of the National Liberation Front of South Vietnam and free from foreign interference.

independent nation of South Vietnam". Some South Vietnamese are participating in the attack on their own government but "trained men and supplies, orders and arms flow in a constant stream from north to south. This support is the heartbeat of the war."

- The US is there "because we have a promise to keep" and to strengthen world order. To leave Vietnam to its fate would shake world confidence in the value of an America's word. "The result would be increased unrest and instability, and even wider war."
- The US is prepared to enter into "unconditional discussions" with the other governments concerned in the Vietnam problem.
- Our objective in Vietnam is the "independence of South Vietnam and its freedom from attack."
- We want nothing for ourselves but will not withdraw "under the cloak of a meaningless aggression."
- South Vietnam should be free from outside interference, tied to no alliance, a military base for no other country.

Allied reaction: France welcomed Johnson's proposals -- with reservations. Britain, Australia, Italy, Japan and Indonesia supported them. U Thant called the speech "forward looking and generous."

Opposition reaction: MAI VAN BO, senior Hanoi diplomat in Paris said negotiations in the present situation would amount to surrender, that any settlement must involve an end to US aggression, withdrawal of US forces and recognition of Vietnam's right to settle her own problems. He said Johnson cannot "buy" Hanoi with an aid project. Bo also rejected the 17 non-aligned nations plea. (New York Times, 10 April)

4/ (Continued)

4. Peaceful reunification of Vietnam is to be settled by the Vietnamese people alone, free from foreign interference.

5/ But the public call for "unconditional discussions" did not represent a major change of policy according to Dean Rusk (25 November 1965, Press Conference). Mr. Rusk said we have consistently welcomed "discussions without conditions, without pre-conditions", adding "there has never been any lack of opportunity to bring this matter of peace to the conference table if the other side is prepared to stop trying to impose their will by force on South Vietnam."

The National Liberation Front rejected the Baltimore proposals. The President had labeled Hanoi the principal antagonist, termed support from North Vietnam the heartbeat of the war and offered to negotiate with other "governments" concerned in the conflict, statements interpreted as proof of US refusal to deal with the Front.

Peking called Johnson's offer a "trick...full of lies and deceptions" designed to induce the Viet Cong to disarm while the US prepared for war. Conditions proposed by the US were called "completely unacceptable" the aid offer an attempt to "buy over the Vietnamese people."

Pravda (11 April) called Johnson's offer "noisy propaganda" which changed neither US policy nor US determination to continue aggression in Vietnam.

Also in April 1965

U THANT was reportedly eager to visit various foreign (mainly Southeast Asian) capitals to explore prospects for a negotiated settlement. Hanoi refused to meet with U Thant, terming any UN injection into the Vietnam issue "inappropriate".

Peking's Jenmin Jih Pao agreed: "The Vietnam question has nothing to do with the United Nations...no meddling by the UN is called for nor will it be tolerated..."

British statesman PATRICK GORDON-WALKER visited several Southeast Asian nations to talk about an end to war. Hanoi and Peking refused to meet with him.

Jenmin Jih Pao (13 April) lauded a statement attributed to Ho Chi Minh in the Japanese Communist Party publication, Akahata, which called for the withdrawal of US forces as a condition for any settlement and called US talk of negotiations "meaningless". But on 14 April, North Vietnam asked the US to recognize its Four Points as a basis for an international conference. Prior US withdrawal was not made a condition for negotiations.

On 18 April, BREZHNEV and LE DUAN, First Secretary of the Vietnam Workers Party, in a communique reporting on recent Moscow talks, said the Soviet Union would send volunteers if North Vietnam requested them and if the US intensified aggression. The communique demanded an end to the bombing, withdrawal of US forces and declared the NLF the only legitimate representative of the Vietnamese people.

PRESIDENT JOHNSON (17 April) rejected proposals that he suspend bombings over North Vietnam to enhance peace prospects. He said he would willingly hold "unconditional discussions" with any government immediately, but warned North Vietnam and the NLF that there is no "human power capable of forcing us" from Vietnam and said the US aim to make South Vietnam free was unchanged. The next day, propaganda leaflets dropped over North Vietnam carried excerpts from the President's Johns Hopkins speech as well as a Saigon statement rejecting recognition of the National Liberation Front.

The INDIAN GOVERNMENT suggested both sides cease fire and an Afro-Asian force be created to police the borders which would not change until the Vietnamese people elected to do so. The US expressed interest in the proposal and discussed it with the Indians. Hanoi and Peking rejected it.

A CONFERENCE on CAMBODIA was discussed seriously in April. The US was interested, thinking it might lead to talks on Vietnam; Moscow and Saigon showed some interest initially. But Sihanouk announced he would not participate in any conference convened as a pretext to discuss Vietnam and saw no need for the US, Thailand or South Vietnam to attend. China also opposed the idea -- and it died. On 3 May, Cambodia broke diplomatic relations with the US.

May 1965

TITO and NASSER urged an end to US air raids and negotiations to end the conflict. FRANCE and RUSSIA called for an end to foreign intervention. U THANT felt the situation was worsening and asked for peace talks. SAIGON began a diplomatic offensive to garner support for both war and peace from non-aligned nations (although on 29 April, Premier Ky had called for an immediate invasion of the DRV by South Vietnamese forces). ALGERIA and the UAR advocated Hanoi's acceptance of US proposals. Calling again for unconditional peace talks on 13 May, PRESIDENT JOHNSON charged China's opposition to a political solution -- which would be in Hanoi's interest -- was meant only to discredit American ability to prevent Communist Chinese domination of Asia.

From 13 to 17 May: US bombing of North Vietnam was halted (five days, 20 hours). At the time it was known that some US effort to find a way out of the conflict was underway but few details were revealed. In an editorial of 30 December 1965, however, the New York Times reported Secretary Rusk had sent a message to Hanoi through the North Vietnamese Embassy in Moscow, explaining the bombing suspension could or would be extended if there were "significant reductions" in Communist

armed attacks in South Vietnam. A "permanent end" to the bombing, it was said, could come only through a permanent end to armed attacks by Viet Cong units in South Vietnam.

One day before air attacks were resumed, Hanoi reportedly asked the French Government to tell the US that Hanoi would negotiate on the basis of the Four Points -- without demanding prior withdrawal of US forces. (New York Times, 19 November 1965; State Department Press Conference, 17 November 1965) Apparently, France was given a letter from Rusk to Hanoi, but never relayed it. Sources in both the State Department and French Government say the North Vietnamese message was not transmitted before bombing was resumed, that Hanoi's word got through a few hours after air action had been resumed. Other sources say the "harsh reaction" by Hanoi to the US offer was "fully known before the air operations were resumed." France maintains that bombing could have been halted again after Hanoi's message became available.

On 18 May (the day bombing resumed) Hanoi Radio broadcast a DRV Foreign Ministry statement calling the bombing pause a "trick" meant to "cover up (America's) extremely dangerous acts intensifying the war in Vietnam...and to deceive world opinion."

June 1965

The CANADIAN representative on the ICC discussed prospects for peace with a North Vietnamese representative. According to the Canadian Foreign Minister's report, prospects were not good.

The BRITISH COMMONWEALTH PRIME MINISTERS meeting in London (17-25 June) formulated a plan -- and a four-nation mission (Britain, Ghana, Nigeria, Trinidad-Tobago) -- to visit countries involved in the war and "explore the circumstances in which a conference might be held to end the fighting in Vietnam." Prime Minister Wilson said their objectives were to achieve: (1) a suspension of air attacks on North Vietnam; (2) a halt in North Vietnam's movement of military forces and material to South Vietnam; and (3) a total cease fire.

Washington and Saigon reacted favorably to the proposal and welcomed any visit from the Commonwealth Mission.

The NLF rejected a Commonwealth visit on 27 June. Hanoi refused to admit the representatives on 1 July. Hanoi Radio said North Vietnam's leaders doubted the goodwill of the group, considering it "only a repetition of Lyndon Johnson's peace negotiations swindle." Peking

called Prime Minister Wilson a "nitwit for making trouble for himself" and refused to meet with the mission (25 June). Moscow at first seemed receptive, then rejected the Commonwealth idea on 24 June 1965. Kosygin said he would conduct no negotiations or efforts to get them started; he suggested the British delegation consult directly with Hanoi or the NLF.^{6/}

July 1965

HAROLD DAVIES, a junior left-wing Minister of the British Government, visited Hanoi in July (9-13) to discuss the Commonwealth Ministers plan. Wilson reported (15 July) that Mr. Davies had been unsuccessful and that part of Hanoi's disinterest stemmed from what Davies termed a conviction among the leaders that victory was imminent: to leave the battlefield for a conference table would be senseless.

DEAN RUSK, on a Voice of America broadcast of 4 July, said the US had asked through intermediaries, "What would be stopped if we stopped the bombings...we've never had a reply..."

In mid-July, Governor HARRIMAN and Premier KOSYGIN held "informal" talks about Vietnam in Moscow. Results were not announced. (Harriman, interviewed on television during August, said the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia believed North Vietnam would negotiate if the US halted air raids. Harriman said he saw no sign this was Hanoi's position and urged the US to stand firm. Harriman said the USSR wanted an end to the war but did not want to seem "soft" in Communist China's eyes. Tito was said to be sympathetic to the US position. Harriman added both the USSR and Yugoslavia would retain the division of Vietnam at the 17th Parallel. [New York Times, 8 August]

On 28 July PRESIDENT JOHNSON announced an additional 50,000 men would be committed to Vietnam, raising the total to 125,000 men. Also on 28 July, President Johnson asked U Thant to employ all his "resources, energy and immense prestige" in finding a way to "halt aggression and bring peace in Vietnam." He asked UN members, singly or jointly, to try to "bring to the table all governments involved, in an attempt to halt all aggression and evolve a peaceful solution."

On 30 July, ARTHUR GOLDBERG wrote to the UN Security Council. He emphasized the Council's particular responsibility to persist in the

^{6/} Patrick Gordon Walker urged the US to negotiate with the NLF a month later; the Administration reportedly held Hanoi responsible for the war and was unmoved by pleas to deal with the Front.

search for peace, said the US was ready -- as always -- to collaborate unconditionally with members of the Security Council in searching for an acceptable formula to restore peace and security in Southeast Asia. He said the US hoped the Council "somehow finds the means to respond effectively to the challenge raised by the state of affairs" in that area. On 11 August, the Soviet Union rejected any participation in UN efforts to exert influence in Vietnam. Hanoi, Peking and the NLF followed suit, revocing opposition to any UN intervention in the Vietnam situation.

August 1965

NASSER reportedly sounded Communist China and North Vietnam on prospects of negotiations. Also reportedly, China and the Viet Cong were confident of victory and barred talks; North Vietnam was allegedly willing to talk at one time, then announced firm opposition to the idea.

SHASTRI and OBOTE (Uganda); NASSER and TOURE (Guinea) urged all-out peace efforts, an international conference and cessation of the bombing.

An INDIAN-YUGOSLAV communique called for a conference of parties concerned in Vietnam -- including the NLF -- and a cessation of bombing while efforts to find peace in the UN continued.

Nhan Dan condemned the communique, leveled heavy criticism at Tito and said UN efforts to find peace would fail.

LeMonde (14 August) quoted an interview with Ho Chi Minh at which he ruled out negotiations until the US gave tangible proof that it accepted the Four Points as a basis for negotiations.

DEAN RUSK (22 August) said the US would agree to a pact restoring the military balance called for in the 1954 Geneva agreements; he suggested this would involve the withdrawal of North Vietnamese forces from below the 17th Parallel and a halt to infiltration. Rusk indicated the US might be willing to end direct military involvement and make other concessions. Rusk also said the US made regular soundings to see if -- or how -- North Vietnam would respond to a new halt in bombing.

On 26 August it was reported that the US had offered to exchange moves showing a desire to curb the war in "unpublicized and indirect approaches to North Vietnam." The US suggested Hanoi withdraw all or

part of the 325th Division in exchange for a cut in US military action, including a cut in air raids against North Vietnam. Hanoi reportedly received these offers with an interest not previously shown. (U Thant apparently tried contacting North Vietnam and China through Algeria; Algerian Minister Bouteflika reportedly conferred with the DRV, NLF and Peking representatives in Algiers.)

LORD BROCKWAY, British Labour Peer, met with the North Vietnamese Ambassador and the NLF representative in Moscow, (24 August). According to Brockway, they had never insisted on total US withdrawal as a condition for peace, were prepared to make concessions beyond the Geneva Accords and would insist on NLF inclusion in any Vietnam conference. The US was "interested but suspicious" of reports that slight shifts in position were evident at the Brockway meetings; the State Department asked for a confidential account and appraisal of the talks.

Hanoi and the National Liberation Front denied Lord Brockway's statements. DRV Ambassador Van Tran So did say "contacts" had been made in Algiers, but that they were not officially from the US Government.

November 1965

Nhan Dan rejected Tito's call for a halt in US bombing of North Vietnam, implementation of the Geneva Accords and an invitation to the NLF to peace talks. Tito and Sihanouk had exchanged letters in August 1965; Sihanouk agreed with Tito's basic proposals but added "first of all, the US occupations and attacking forces must be withdrawn...or at least there must be a formal agreement on the principle of evacuation before negotiations." (VNA, 14 November)*

HO CHI MINH, in reply to a letter from eight American Nobel Peace Prize winners, called US peace statements "but deceitful talk" because the US policy is "to negotiate from a position of strength..." He said the Four Points were the "most correct way to a peaceful settlement." (VNA, 17 November)

11 November to 15 December: The IA PIRA-FANFANI INITIATIVE. According to reports released after the fact, Giorgio La Pira, former Mayor of Florence, and another Italian emissary, met with Ho Chi Minh and Pham Van Dang in Hanoi on 11 November. They emerged with the impression that the two conditions required by Hanoi for any peace talks were: (1) a total cease fire in both North and South Vietnam, without prior evacuation of US troops; (2) recognition and acceptance of the 1954 Geneva Agreements as the basis for negotiations. The North

*Vietnam (North) News Agency

Vietnamese leaders consistently maintained the Four Points were an accurate embodiment of the Geneva Agreements.

Italian Foreign Minister Fanfani relayed this information to President Johnson in a letter of 20 November 1965. Two weeks later (4 December) Rusk replied to Minister Fanfani. His letter raised some questions about the Italian version of Hanoi's offer, disagreed that the Four Points were an "authentic interpretation" of the Geneva Accords and asked Fanfani for further clarification.

Fanfani replied on 13 December, saying his government had asked for such clarification on 8 December, that Hanoi's response would be given the US as soon as it arrived.

But on the same day, US air attacks struck closer than before to Hanoi and Haiphong. From 13 to 15 December, major industrial targets were hit for the first time including the Uongbi thermal power plant 14 miles from Haiphong.

US Government sources publicly confirmed reports that Hanoi had relayed an offer to hold talks leading to negotiations through two Italian intermediaries on 17 December. It was also confirmed that no talks had been held.^{1/}

North Vietnam denied issuing peace feelers, called such reports "sheer groundless fabrications" and reiterated that the Four Points were the only basis for settlement of the Vietnam problem.

December 1965

UN sources said the DRV showed no interest in peace talks proposed by U Thant but that the US was receptive. U Thant said he had had no direct contacts with the parties involved for some time. (New York Times, 1 December)

USSR FOREIGN MINISTER GROMYKO told Britain's Michael Stewart (3 December) that peace talks on Vietnam would be conditioned on a cessation of US bombing of North Vietnam and the withdrawal of US

^{1/} Secretary Rusk, in a 26 November press conference, had said Hanoi had indicated it would not consider ending aggression against South Vietnam, that unconditional talks would be acceptable to the US but there was now no sign of Hanoi's willingness to compromise. Rusk said the bombing might stop if the DRV would halt some of its war activities.

troops. Whether troop withdrawal had to be prior to talks or a result of talks was left vague by Gromyko.

HO CHI MINH said Johnson's offer of unconditional talks was insincere and "absolutely unacceptable." Ho ridiculed charges of North Vietnamese aggression and denied that pressure from Peking prevented Hanoi from holding peace talks. (24 November TV interview (in English) with British Journalist Felix Greene, made public 7 December)

Mr. Rusk ruled out compromise with the Viet Cong saying there could be no political or territorial gain for them as part of a peace settlement. (New York Times, 8 December)

The UK proposed a 12-nation appeal be made to North Vietnam to stop fighting and negotiate a peace. Britain separately called on the Soviet Union to sign and circulate such a message among nations represented at the 1954 Geneva Conference as well as those on the International Control Commission. (New York Times, 9 December)

Hanoi Radio announced, "The DRV Government categorically rejects all British plans and proposals made under the pretense of peace. Once again the DRV Ministry of Foreign Affairs solemnly reaffirms that the four-point stand of the DRV Government is the only basis for a correct settlement of the Vietnamese problem; any solution contrary to this stand is null and void and unable to bring about genuine peace in Vietnam." (VNA, 17 December)

A one-day Christmas truce in ground and air action was observed on 25 December. The next day, fighting in South Vietnam resumed, but the halt in bombing continued.

POPE PAUL VI had appealed publicly for a Christmas holiday truce and efforts by all sides were made to move toward negotiations. On 19 December, a private appeal was sent to Hanoi. Ho Chi Minh's reply of 28 December charged U.S. leaders "want war and not peace." He said talk about "unconditional negotiations" is a "maneuver to cover up" plans for further "war intensification and extension." The Pope's message of 1 January 1966 to Moscow, Peking, Hanoi and Saigon, asking for an end to conflict met with similarly unsuccessful results.

The concentrated U.S. peace drive began on 29 December. Air action over North Vietnam, halted at Christmas, was suspended until 31 January (36 days, 15 hours). Governors HARRIMAN and WILLIAMS, Ambassador GOLDBERG and three other representatives were dispatched to 34 capitals; the U.S. position was discussed with some 115 governments. Hanoi was contacted indirectly. The far-flung public effort failed.

In a letter to world leaders (24 January), HO CHI MINH repeated earlier criticisms of the U.S. peace drive (a "noisy propaganda drive," an effort to fool public opinion) and termed Johnson's State of the Union statement that the U.S. will not withdraw from Vietnam "an impudent threat." He said the DRV's Four Points were the basis for negotiations. And a fifth point was made: Ho said the U.S. must recognize the National Liberation Front as the "sole genuine representative of the South Vietnamese people and engage in negotiations with it." (Ho's letter was released on 28 January. On 12 January 1966, Quan Doi Nhan Dan had declared it "absurd" that "other proposals" -- like the U.S. 14 Points -- be discussed. If the U.S. accepts the Geneva Agreements, it should accept the Four Points which are the "sum and substance" of Geneva.)

ALEXANDER SHELEPIN, Secretary of the Communist Party Central Committee, headed a five-man mission to Hanoi (7 to 12 January 1966). The result: increased Soviet aid to North Vietnam. (Unremitting Chinese attacks on USSR "peace plots" during and after Shelepin's visit may indicate Shelepin discussed - and urged - a negotiated end to the war while in North Vietnam.)

The NLF rejected U.S. peace offers made through intermediaries, according to a 13 January report carried by the official Algerian news agency. The report followed a meeting between President Boumedienne and the NLF representative in Algiers. However, a Viet Cong source in Algiers reportedly hinted that Hanoi might drop the demand for withdrawal of U.S. troops prior to talks if the U.S. agreed to talk directly to the NLF. The source said there could be no change in the NLF position until the U.S. granted it official recognition. Some Front difficulty with Hanoi was indicated, according to American journalists.

U THANT suggested (20 January) that all elements of the South Vietnamese people -- presumably including the Viet Cong -- should be represented in a postwar government. DEAN RUSK (21 January) said he could not report on "any positive and encouraging response (from the other side) to the hopes of...mankind" for negotiations to end the war in Vietnam. Rejecting U Thant's proposal to promise, or to concede the possibility in postwar government to the NLF, Rusk said the issue must be decided in free elections.

Japanese PREMIER SATO urged (25 January) an international conference be held and appointed M. Yokoyama his special emissary in a peace drive. Sato said the recent mission of Foreign Minister Shiina to Moscow, to secure Soviet support for efforts to begin negotiations, had failed.

On 31 January, PRESIDENT JOHNSON ordered the renewal of air attacks against North Vietnam. He said efforts of U.S. allies had been rebuffed

and efforts of neutral nations had come to nothing during the 37-day pause; he said "our own private approaches have all been in vain." Johnson called Ho Chi Minh's letter of 24 January the answer to peace efforts, adding that the North Vietnamese "persist in aggression... insist on the surrender of South Vietnam to communism" and that "there is no readiness or willingness to talk, no readiness for peace in that regime today."

AMBASSADOR GOLDBERG, in a letter to Security Council President Seydoux of 31 January, summarized the U.S. position on negotiations and requested an urgent meeting of the Security Council to consider the Vietnam situation. Goldberg said the U.S. was ready to talk without prior conditions, ready to withdraw troops as soon as South Vietnam is free of outside interference. He asked the Council to seek an international conference to end the war -- making a cease-fire the first order of business -- and establish a permanent peace in Southeast Asia. Goldberg said the U.S. would help in all appropriate ways, including arbitration or mediation. 8/

8/ Rusk said (11 February) the U.S. had not sought UN action earlier for fear debate would interfere with private moves. President

February 1966

On 1 February, HO CHI MINH wrote French President de Gaulle, asking for his help in preventing any "new perfidious US maneuver." The following day, the North Vietnam foreign ministry formally rejected -- as it had several times in the past -- any UN interference in the Vietnam situation. The resumption of bombing raids against North Vietnam revealed the "hypocrisy" of Johnson's peace drive, according to a message delivered to ICC members in Hanoi.

The NLF said any UN decision on Vietnam would be null and void on 3 February.

Governor HARRIMAN said the US would agree to NLF participation in negotiations as an independent group. He stressed the US refusal to accept the Front as a government delegation. (New York Times, 7 February)

During early February, the Senate Foreign Relations Committee opened hearings on Vietnam: high level US and Vietnamese leaders met at Honolulu (the conference stressed pacification, economic, social and other non-military problems). At the conclusion of the conference, both Ky and Thieu said they refused to recognize or negotiate with the NLF; they showed little eagerness to meet with Hanoi but reportedly tried not to disassociate themselves from the US stand.

NKRUMAH and NASSER met in Cairo (15 February) in a new effort to initiate peace talks. Nkrumah then visited Rangoon, Peking, Hanoi and Moscow, urging negotiations. He was unsuccessful.

HANOI (15 February) rejected a Somali proposal of January 1966 that an Asian-African committee explore possibilities for peace. Hanoi called this interference in internal affairs.

8/ (Continued)

Matsui summarized the results of the Council's work on 26 February. He said there was "a degree of common feeling among many members of the Council" that (1) there is general and grave concern over the continuation of hostilities and a strong desire for a peaceful solution and (2) a termination of the conflict should be sought through negotiations in an appropriate forum in order to work out the implementation of the Geneva Accords. The letter stated it was Matsui's understanding that the Council remained seized of the Vietnam problem. But the Council accomplished nothing.

9/ He was less successful at home. A coup executed by Ghanaian military officers ousted Nkrumah from the Presidency in late February.

PRESIDENT DE GAULLE (16 February), in his reply to Ho Chi Minh's letter of 1 February, offered to play a role in settling the war whenever feasible. He did not think it feasible at that time. De Gaulle said a return to-and implementation of-the Geneva Accords was the only possible solution to conflict. He urged creation of a representative government in Saigon. U Thant supported de Gaulle's proposals; the US was silent.

A North Vietnamese reply to U Thant's peace efforts was reported by the New York Times on 17 February. It first appeared that Hanoi had posed three conditions for talks: (1) a new pause in bombing raids against North Vietnam; (2) an end to US escalation of the ground war in South Vietnam; (3) NLF representation at a peace conference. The note indicated the US need not announce a halt in escalation publicly.

UN sources said (18 February) that the conditions were U Thant's, not Hanoi's; officials denied any knowledge of new or changed points issued by North Vietnam.

20 February: Senator Robert F. Kennedy suggested a US offer to the Viet Cong of a share of power in South Vietnam would be the best hope for an eventual accord. Vice President Humphrey, George Ball and McGeorge Bundy scored Kennedy's suggestion.

PRIME MINISTER WILSON and PREMIER KOSYGIN met in Moscow, 22-24 February. Wilson urged a reconvening of the Geneva conference; Kosygin urged a return to the Geneva Accords and US acceptance of Hanoi's peace terms. The Russians insisted North Vietnam and the US -- not the USSR and Britain -- must arrange a conference.

British LORD CHALFONT met with Li Chang, a North Vietnamese envoy to Moscow at the same time. Li Chang reportedly pledged to clarify Hanoi's peace terms. Wilson later said Britain had succeeded in "getting a line open" to Hanoi -- apparently through Lord Chalfont -- but Hanoi said Wilson had distorted the facts.

March 1966

Ho Chi Minh reportedly rejected a proposal from INDIAN PRESIDENT RADHAKRISHNAN that an Asian or African peace-keeping force be created to replace American troops in South Vietnam (New York Times, 4 March). A similar proposal from President Radhakrishnan in April 1965 had also been rejected: the DRV Foreign Ministry told the Indian Consul General in Hanoi on 5 May 1965 that the idea to create an Afro-Asian force to supervise the 17th Parallel was unacceptable.

During the winter and early spring of 1966, the Sino-Soviet dispute became more and more vitriolic. Jenmin Jih Pao (7 March) charged that Russian leaders were determined to lead Vietnamese communists to the conference table to bring about another "Munich." Hamburg Welt published a purported secret letter from the USSR to all Communist Party units, charging Peking with trying to prolong the war for their own national interests. Peking hotly denied this -- as well as reports of (Russian) difficulty sending aid through China to Vietnam. Chinese Party leaders spurned USSR pleas for united action, refused to attend the USSR Party Congress and repeated charges of USSR-US collaboration in a "plot" to arrange peace talks.

Canadian CHESTER RONNING met with leaders in Saigon and Hanoi in early March. Commenting on the mission, Ronning said he saw a major role for the ICC in arranging peace talks but that India and Poland did not feel the time was ripe for successful initiatives. (New York Times, 17 March)

April 1966

U THANT said he would advocate UN Security Council involvement in the Vietnam situation if North Vietnam and Communist China could -- or would -- present their side of the issue. Thant noted their reluctance to do so. He called for a unified Vietnam and neutralization of the area guaranteed by the big powers, including the U.S. and China. Thant reiterated his three point proposal (cessation of U.S. bombing of North Vietnam; a scaling down of all military activity in South Vietnam; a willingness of all parties to the conflict to meet with each other to discuss peace).

On 18 April 1966, SENATOR MANSFIELD proposed the U.S., Hanoi and "elements in South Vietnam" meet at a peace conference (of foreign ministers or higher officials) in some Asian country. The Administration supported and agreed with Mansfield's suggestion.

Radio Hanoi (23 April) called this a "new peace trick," part of America's "two-faced" policy of talking peace while escalating war. Nhan Dan said the U.S. must recognize the NLF as the genuine and only representative of the South Vietnamese people and accept the DRV Four Points, the only correct basis to settle the Vietnam problem. Radio Moscow said U.S. actions in Vietnam belied Washington's professed desire for peace; Peking denounced the Mansfield move in similar but more vitriolic terms.

DRV PREMIER PHAM VAN DONG, addressing the Third National Assembly in Hanoi (22-26 April), reportedly said the US had never officially announced its recognition of the four points and it objected to the third point. "To object to the third point is to object to the whole four-point stand," according to Dong. He demanded the US prove its recognition of Hanoi's position by actual deeds, which might include cessation of bombing "definitively and unconditionally" as well as cessation of "all other acts of war against the DRV."

HO CHI MINH reportedly told the Assembly the "only correct solution to end this war" was contained in his 24 January letter to world leaders. Cairo's Al Musawar (28 April) quoted an interview with Ho Chi Minh in which Ho expressed similar views. He did not specify whether recognition of the NLF would exclude the Saigon government from peace talks, however.

Canadian PRIME MINISTER PEARSON proposed a cease-fire and gradual troop withdrawal as steps toward peace (29 April). The cease-fire would be the "first part of a wider pattern of peace negotiations without prior conditions." As negotiations progressed, "equivalent and phased withdrawals from South Vietnam by North Vietnam and by the forces of other governments could take place under international supervision... (with) concurrent arrangements to ensure that the people of South Vietnam were enabled...to choose their own form of government and that the withdrawal of troops would not simply create a political vacuum in which terrorism and coercion could continue..." Pearson suggested working through the Geneva Conference and International Control Commission would be most appropriate.

The US and South Vietnam backed Pearson's suggestions.

A New Delhi dispatch of 4 May referred to Eastern European sources who said no immediate prospects of success for Pearson's initiative were evident in Hanoi. Previous Canadian efforts to organize a new Geneva Conference through the ICC had "equally failed" to receive the accord of all parties concerned. The report noted Ronning's March visit to Hanoi, saying..."the results of his mission are unknown but nothing has reached New Delhi that indicates any change in the position of the parties concerned." Agence France-Presse (3 May) reported the Chinese Foreign Minister said Pearson's initiative "...is an old American maneuver which does not merit comment."

Danish PRIME MINISTER KRAG urged the US to seek a peaceful solution in Vietnam through negotiations with the Viet Cong and others involved in the conflict; he recommended a transitional government be composed of all elements in South Vietnam. (Washington Post, 29 April)

May 1966

In a joint communique issued 22 May 1966, GUINEA and ALGERIA called for an end to US bombing of North Vietnam and strict respect for the Geneva Agreements as a means toward a peaceful settlement in Vietnam.

THE NETHERLANDS' FOREIGN MINISTER LUNS announced his government will use every opportunity to contribute to a peaceful solution to the war but that every effort should also be made to prevent further escalation of the conflict. Luns said the first step toward a cease-fire and prevention of further escalation should be a reciprocal decrease in acts of war. Luns said The Netherlands would favor a bombing halt if there were concrete indications this might induce Hanoi to be willing to negotiate. (New York Times, 20 May)

U THANT, speaking before the Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America Convention on 24 May, said peace can be restored only "by a return to the Geneva Agreements...and...as a preparatory measure it would be necessary to start scaling down military operations and to agree to discussions which include the actual combatants. Perhaps...it will still be possible to arrive at an agreement between all powers concerned." U Thant said the five major powers -- including Communist China -- were among those powers concerned. He added, "the solution lies in the hands of those who have the power and the responsibility to decide..." not the United Nations. (New York Times, 25 May)

June 1966

Newsweek Magazine, on 6 June, reported Communist diplomats in Washington as saying North Vietnam had made a move toward initiation of peace talks using ROMANIAN intermediaries. (A high-level Romanian delegation visited Hanoi from 5-11 May and stopped in Peking and Moscow later in the month.) Le Duan reportedly told Romanian official BODNARAS that the DRV would not come to a peace table "on its knees" but was interested in exploring a peaceful settlement.

Le Monde (31 May) reported an "important UN personality" had hinted the Romanian government was trying to persuade Peking to accept negotiations on Vietnam with the United States. The article said the Romanians had taken soundings in Peking and would continue to work toward agreement even though they had little hope of success.

An Agence France-Presse report of 11 June mentioned an atmosphere of optimism in Hanoi that the DRV could win peace on its terms. "Informed sources" reportedly said all of North Vietnam's allies except China desired an end to conflict. The forthcoming visit of Jean Sainteny may provide an opening for peace moves, according to the report. And Pham Van Dong reportedly said Vietnam is in favor of neutralization but feels the time is not ripe for this solution.

In early June, Canadian AMBASSADOR RONNING told the Canadian Parliament he had tried to persuade Hanoi to make a "corresponding move" in response to a US cessation of bombing, but had received a negative response. Agence France-Presse (22 June) reported "well-informed sources in Hanoi" said North Vietnam had rejected US proposals transmitted by Ronning. Agence France-Presse said this conformed with DRV hard-line policies and objectives of resistance and victory. These sources did not feel Hanoi was "intransigent", however, although negotiations at this time were rejected, negotiations at another time were not impossible.

An optimistic interpretation of the Ronning Mission in the Washington Post (26 June) held that "informed Canadians" feel Ronning came back with a "speck of hope, with a possible opening, with something more than nothing". But the article added, in terms of hard substance the Ronning visit produced no change and yielded no suggestion of an acceptable basis for peace talks. Offsetting this report, George Ball said flatly the Ronning Mission produced "no encouragement that the North Vietnamese are prepared to come to the conference table." Robert McCloskey, speaking for the State Department on 23 June, said neither oral reports nor public statements indicated any change in the basic elements of Hanoi's position. "No acceptable basis for talks has yet been found." And Dean Rusk told the SEATO Conference in Canberra, Australia: "There would be peace when Hanoi gave up its intention... (to)...seize South Vietnam by force...I see no prospect of peace at the present moment." (Washington Post, 27 June 1966)

French official JEAN SAINTENY visited Hanoi and Peking (June to early July 1966) in an attempt to find some basis for a conference. A Chinese Foreign Ministry statement of 24 June said the "French official" then in Peking had not succeeded in talking with Chinese officials. Agence France-Presse reported from Hanoi that Sainteny had "friendly conversations" with Ho Chi Minh and Pham Van Dong, but did not know results of the talks. Sainteny told Paris Match he thought Hanoi would reduce aid to the Viet Cong if the US "made a gesture." (Reuters, 26 July) And in September, Drew Middleton reported Sainteny had said it was his impression that the DRV "might

accept the opening of negotiations providing the US commits itself to withdrawing its forces according to specified schedules." Sainteny added he thought a US acceptance of U Thant's proposals would elicit a favorable reaction from North Vietnam and the NLF. (New York Times, 26 September 1966)

On 30 June, fuel depots near Hanoi and Haiphong were bombed; on 30 June, PRESIDENT JOHNSON spoke in Des Moines and Omaha of the US desire to meet with North Vietnam, to discuss a means to end the conflict in Vietnam. Peking called his statements "more US war blackmail." (New China News Agency, 1 July 1966) The bombings were said to have "removed all restraints on the Chinese." (People's Liberation Army Daily, 19 July)

Hanoi called the bombings "criminal acts of aggression," a new step in escalating the war" and an exposure of the "deceitfulness of US talk about peace." (VNA, 30 June) NLF Central Committee President Nguyen Huu Tho termed the bombings an "act of suicide...another frenzied step of escalation." Moscow called the air attacks a "particularly dangerous action" which demonstrated the US commitment to escalation and proved US talk of peace to be "mere empty verbiage." (Tass, 3 June)

July 1966

During June and July it was frequently speculated that private efforts were underway to arrange a peace conference. The New York Times (1 July) said hints of a new British peace move were borne out by the announcement of Wilson's August trip to Moscow and reported the peace effort would be related to Britain's role as Geneva co-chairman

The French magazine Enterprise reported that during a brief personal visit to Peking, Ho Chi Minh had told the Chinese, "If there are no new developments, we will have to come to terms (with the US) toward the middle of 1967." Ho reportedly asked both China and the USSR for "approval," to explore the possibility of a negotiated settlement. Enterprise said, "contrary to Peking, Moscow did not answer no." (Enterprise, 7 July 1966; Washington Post, 6 July 1966)

According to Seymour Topping, senior American officials felt another diplomatic approach will be made to persuade Hanoi to negotiate, probably after the furor over bombing raids against Hanoi and Haiphong fuel depots had subsided. (New York Times, 6 July)

President Johnson said diplomatic reports indicated the opposition no longer really expected a military victory in South Vietnam but added he was "aware of the dangers of speculation" -- that this might make the

opposition more amenable to cease-fire talks. (New York Times, 6 July) But U Thant said he knew of no recent developments likely to lead to a peace conference. (New York Times, 6 July) And George Ball cautioned that it may be "quite a long time" before the changed attitude in Hanoi is translated into a political decision which could lead to an end to war. A Washington Post report (7 July) said Mr. Ball was trying to keep President Johnson's optimism within bounds and noted that other officials felt Hanoi was trying to build the kind of public morale necessary for prolonged conflict.

Indian PRIME MINISTER GANDHI made a detailed proposal for negotiations within the framework of the Geneva Agreements on 7 July. She then visited Cairo, Belgrade and Moscow to discuss Vietnam and other issues. Mrs. Gandhi called on the UK and the USSR to immediately convene a meeting of the Geneva Conference and appealed for an immediate end to bombing in North Vietnam followed by a "cessation of hostilities as well as of hostile movements and actions on all sides throughout Vietnam." She said the ICC would have to safeguard a standstill military arrangement, suggested the Geneva Conference might guarantee the independence and territorial integrity of a neutral Vietnam and neighboring Laos and Cambodia.^{10/}

The State Department welcomed this initiative, stated American support for "...the reconvening of the Geneva Conference to bring about a settlement on the basis of the Geneva Accords of 1954 and 1962" and said a "cessation of hostilities in both North and South Vietnam could be the first order of business" at a new conference. South Vietnam also reacted favorably.

TITO and NASSER supported the Gandhi proposal. PRIME MINISTER WILSON welcomed it, but added, "I would not feel that we ought to insist on a cease-fire as a pre-condition." (London Reuters, 7 July)

^{10/} The Gandhi-Kosygin communique issued at the end of Mrs. Gandhi's Moscow visit expressed concern at the dangerous situation in Southeast Asia, noted the intensification of hostilities in Vietnam and the extension of air raids to the vicinity of Haiphong and Hanoi. The communique called for an immediate end to bombings and said a "solution to the problem can be found only within the framework of the 1954 Geneva Agreements." Asked at a 29 July New Delhi press conference why communique issued after her talks with Nasser and Tito (and Kosygin) had not supported her Vietnam proposals, Mrs. Gandhi said Hanoi had specifically asked the UAR and Yugoslavia not to discuss anything until bombing was stopped. A New York Times reporter (Lucas) said her statements confirmed a shift in position on Vietnam to one closer to the Soviet stand: that cessation of the bombing must precede negotiations. (New York Times, 20 July)

According to a Prague report, "responsible (Soviet) quarters" believed "talks with Wilson on Vietnam would be senseless" given his present attitude. (London Reuters, 7 July)

Hanoi dismissed each point in the Gandhi proposal as imposing unacceptable obligations on North Vietnam. (Quan Doi Nhan Dan, 19 July) Any bargaining or concessions granted in exchange for a US halt in bombing was rejected. There is "no alternative" to the four point and five point stands, said the article.

Chou En-lai and Foreign Minister Chen Yi berated the Gandhi proposal. Chou called it "rendering service to the US"; Chen Yi denounced this new evidence of US-Soviet collusion -- now aided by "Indian reactionaries" -- and stressed the will of the Vietnamese people to fight and the Chinese readiness to help them. (New China News Agency, 10 July)^{11/} Recent peace efforts by the USSR, Britain, ICC and India were termed a "new Munich plot" by Peking on 11 July. (New China News Agency)

A 19 September report in Blitz, a left-wing Indian weekly, said the Indian proposals had received "a good reception" but had not been adopted because Cairo, Belgrade and Moscow had felt the initiative should come from Hanoi.

Following PRIME MINISTER WILSON's trip to Moscow, the Soviet Foreign Ministry issued this statement: "The British Government continues to proceed from support of the American aggression...although it disassociates itself from the American bombings of the suburbs of

^{11/} Jenmin Jih Pao (10 July) wrote: "The people should and can only rely on themselves to make revolution and wage people's war in their own country, since these are their own affairs. No outside aid can replace their struggle..." This is a bit different from Chen Yi's pledge of willingness to assist the Vietnamese people wage war. On 16 July, Ho Chi Minh spoke in Hanoi reaffirming North Vietnam's determination to continue "until final victory." He said the DRV four points and the NLF's five point stand were the only basis for settlement and denounced the US "peace talk swindle." Quasi-mobilization of reserve units was ordered the same day. Peking praised this speech: Chou En-lai promised China would take "any necessary action" to support Vietnam. (VNA, NCNA, 19 July)

Pravda also noted Ho's speech, reiterated Soviet support for Hanoi and said there was "only one way to solve the Vietnam problem": US cessation of all acts of war and withdrawal of all forces. (20 July)

Hanoi and Haiphong....The Soviet Government, on the other hand, proceeds from support of the Vietnamese people's just struggle...strongly condemns the U.S. criminal actions in Vietnam and believes that the solution of the Vietnamese question must be based on the well-known proposals (of the) DRV and the NFLSV." (Tass, 18 July)

A 20 July GVN proclamation described Saigon's position. It said South Vietnam is prepared to cease all military activity if the Communists, with the approval of North Vietnam, halt their expansionist ambitions supported by arms. This requires that Hanoi (1) withdraw troops and political cadres operating covertly in the South; (2) dissolve the so-called NLF and cease all military activity and sabotage and renounce all subversion in the South; (3) respect the spirit of the Geneva Accords to allow the population of the South freely to determine its own fate according to democratic principles. Bombing of the DRV would be halted if these conditions are met and effectively guaranteed. 12/

Japanese PREMIER SATO, during a visit from Soviet FOREIGN MINISTER GROMYKO, said Japan was ready to hold an international conference on a peaceful settlement in Vietnam and indicated he would seek Gromyko's help in instigating a peace move. (Tokyo, Kyodo, 21 July) But Gromyko rejected Sato's appeal, saying, "The Soviet Union is not a country involved in the Vietnam conflict; it is not intending to convene a conference on its own accord." Tokyo's Jiji of 26 July reported Gromyko had urged Sato to press the United States to pull out of Vietnam because this was the only way to end the conflict.

French newspaper Figaro (27 July) interviewed the Agence France-Presse Hanoi correspondent, Jean Raffaelli. Raffaelli said the DRV leadership foresaw a military victory in Vietnam. The recent mobilization indicated Hanoi had not exhausted her manpower, that there were still enough men to fight a war of ground resistance; he felt offers of foreign "volunteers" would be refused as long as possible because Hanoi did not want to internationalize the war. Raffaelli said U.S. bombing of oil depots (29, 30 June) made resistance the only course

12/ But in U.S. News and World Report, 25 July, Premier Ky is quoted saying he thought an invasion of North Vietnam was needed to win the war: "Sooner or later, we, as free men, will have to face the Chinese Communists. And I think it's better to face them right now than in five or ten years." Ky added, "We have no desire to invade North Vietnam because this is a war of self-defense" but if Hanoi "insists on continuing aggression" it must be "punished and its sanctuary destroyed."

of action open to North Vietnam: capitulation was impossible and negotiations undesirable when they might appear dictated. The DRV leadership was said to be united in the desire to see a "Vietnamese Vietnam" and the North Vietnamese confident in their leaders. Raffaelli said aid from communist countries had greatly increased and felt the nations with greatest influence in Hanoi were Russia, China, the UAR and France. (Raffaelli later said he thought Peking's influence was so dominant in Hanoi that Russia could only act as a brake against China.) Although Hanoi was probably working toward peace, said Raffaelli, attainment of a favorable and tough position first was considered indispensable.

In a written response to questions posed by Harrison Salisbury of the New York Times, Cambodia's PRINCE SIHANOUK suggested the key to settlement lay with the Viet Cong, not China or North Vietnam. He said the U.S. might well find that a means of resolving the conflict "...is perhaps within your hand's reach, not far from Saigon itself." Sihanouk said the NLF might prove to be an appropriate partner for negotiating an end to the conflict because they had the largest popular support, best represented the aspirations of South Vietnam and were thus qualified to be an "interlocuteur valable" or valid participant in negotiations. Salisbury noted that de Gaulle's recognition of the Algerian Liberation Front as an "interlocuteur valable" had paved the way for the end to the war in Algeria. (New York Times, 4 August)

An emissary of Philippine FOREIGN MINISTER MARCOS reportedly interviewed Peking's Foreign Minister Chen Yi in late July to discuss the possibility of a Chinese call for an Asian peace conference. Chen Yi reportedly accepted Marcos' sincerity in desiring to end the war but said Hanoi had repeatedly told Peking that third party mediation would be fruitless unless DRV and NLF conditions were met. The conditions reportedly included withdrawal of U.S. forces and "recognition of the NLF's political personality." (Agence France-Presse, Singapore, 1 August)

August 1966

On 6 August, Foreign Ministers of Thailand, Malaysia and the Philippines (the Association of Southeast Asia, or ASA) called for Asian nations to join in a peace appeal directed to the leaders of all countries involved in the Vietnam conflict. Diplomatic notes were sent to 17 Asian countries following the public announcement of this Asian initiative.

Hanoi immediately denounced the ASA appeal, calling it a "cheap farce staged by third-class henchmen of U.S. imperialism." The U.S. was charged with reviving the ASA "to cater for the U.S. aggression in

Vietnam" and with "cynically playing the dirty peace fraud by means of their henchmen in ASA while stepping up their war activities in both North and South Vietnam..." (Nhan Dan, 8 August) Peking had scored the Asian conference idea in similar terms in a 7 August broadcast. The NLF, Cambodia and North Korea also refused to attend an Asian conference.

The US, South Vietnam and Japan supported the Asian initiative; other invitees were rather lukewarm. No conference was held.

On 17 August, Le Monde reported on speculation that the United Nations would be the forum for new peace efforts. Rumors allegedly varied on the form of initiatives to be taken but neutral, especially Asian, nations were expected to play key roles. Certain Asian delegations were supposedly prepared to put forward resolutions calling for a cease-fire and negotiations in Vietnam; they were assured of support from U Thant and Afghanistan diplomat Pazhwak. Other rumors said U Thant himself had recently set up contacts to make one last try for peace in Vietnam before deciding whether to be a candidate for re-election as Secretary General. According to Le Monde, all these efforts, through non-aligned nations, were designed to achieve a de facto cease-fire or de-escalation which would be accepted unofficially by both Washington and Hanoi.

September 1966

POPE PAUL VI, in a 19 September encyclical, issued a plea for peace in Vietnam; he restated this appeal at the UN General Assembly on 4 October. The US supported Papal efforts to encourage a conference and/or mediate between disputing parties. But Radio Hanoi termed "pathetic" the appeals for peace made by "certain religious circles which have always chorused the US imperialists' peace song." (VNA, 23 September)

At a September meeting, French FOREIGN MINISTER COUVE de MURVILLE and Yugoslavia's PRESIDENT TITO agreed that peace talks could not begin until the US stopped increasing military pressure in South Vietnam and halted the bombing over North Vietnam. Tito disagreed with the French estimate that the US alone held the key to peace, however, and maintained that China and North Vietnam -- in that order -- were equally at fault. Couve reportedly said China could not block negotiations if Washington wanted them to begin. (Washington Post, 16 September 1966)^{13/}

^{13/} Theodore Draper, and others, mention a background press briefing given by Couve de Murville in Paris during mid-September 1966. These points were made:

- Hanoi and Peking were willing to negotiate in 1964 and again in early 1965, but Washington refused to talk.

13/ (Continued)

- About 18 months earlier (April/May 1965) Hanoi asked France to tell Washington that actual withdrawal of US forces was not a pre-condition to negotiations.
- France had reservations about acting as an intermediary (apparently during the May 1965 bombing pause), but had agreed to do so. At that time, the contents of a letter from Secretary Rusk to the DRV had not been conveyed to Hanoi because Rusk had not specifically asked France to do so. Couve said the letter changed nothing, that it arrived toward the end of the session and that France thought some points needed clarification. For example, Couve wondered what the US meant by communist evacuation of South Vietnam: just North Vietnamese regular army troops or all of those in South Vietnam fighting against the US?
- The US wanted to pre-judge the outcome of negotiations by saying it would evacuate South Vietnam when its objectives had been attained -- or, when the rebellion had been quashed and Saigon preserved. Couve said in any settlement, neither the present government nor the present non-communist alignment could be maintained. He felt no one knew what government in South Vietnam would be like if the US left except that it would be neither the Ky government nor that of Hanoi. He felt it would be communist but not North Vietnamese communism.
- Because the DRV and NLF have no faith in US statements, they need firm evidence of US intentions -- such as a US declaration to withdraw unilaterally according to a timetable. Couve defended the DRV military position (the US could turn on and off its military machine at will; guerrillas could not stop and start fighting the same way).
- The US was not taking sufficient advantage of differences between Hanoi, Peking, and the Front. Peking was satisfied with the present situation, but Hanoi was not unalterably opposed to negotiations. Hanoi, said Couve, is also aware of the long-range threat to Vietnam posed by Communist China. This awareness explains DRV interest in a solution which includes a guarantee of Vietnamese neutrality. The NLF does not want to be taken over by Hanoi; it wants to maintain a separate status, at least for the foreseeable future. (See Draper's The Abuse of Power)

Le Monde quoted a 19 September radio broadcast in which Couve de Murville said France has never proposed and "does not intend in the future in any way to propose her mediation between the governments of the United States and North Vietnam" because France does not feel it would be useful. He said that because Communist China and North Vietnam do not belong to the United Nations, he did not see it possible to engage in discussions of Vietnam -- either in the Security Council or the General Assembly.

On 22 September, AMBASSADOR GOLDBERG outlined U.S. peace proposals in a speech to the UN General Assembly. He said: "We are prepared to order a cessation of all bombing of North Vietnam the moment we are assured, privately or otherwise, that this step will be answered promptly by a corresponding and appropriate de-escalation on the other side." Saying there need be no fear that the U.S. would establish military bases in Vietnam, Goldberg said "...the U.S. stands ready to withdraw its forces as others withdraw theirs." He asked if North Vietnam would be willing to agree to a "timed schedule for a supervised phased withdrawal of all external forces, including those of North Vietnam." On the question of Viet Cong representation in negotiations, Goldberg referred to President Johnson's statement that this "would not be an insurmountable problem."

Radio Hanoi, 23 September, called "hypocritical" Goldberg's saying the U.S. was prepared to halt bombing because that was followed by the "slandorous statement" calling for a corresponding and appropriate de-escalation on the other side. The broadcast scored the U.S. for failing to reconcile itself "to NFLSV as the sole genuine representative of the South Vietnamese people," to admit that "any question and solution concerning South Vietnam should be discussed with the NLF." Goldberg was accused of trying to secure UN intervention so the U.S. could continue its aggression against Vietnam. Pointing to several incidents (including Secretary McNamara's announcement of 22 September that the U.S. would invest \$7 million more in new plane production), Hanoi claimed there was enough evidence "...to lay bare the real nature of the new U.S. peace negotiations proposal." On 24 September, Premier Pham Van Dong said: "The UN has absolutely no right whatsoever to intervene in the Vietnamese issue." If the U.S. wants peace, he said, it must "recognize the four-point stand of the DRV government and show its good will by acts, that is, to put a definite and unconditional end" to bombing and other acts of war against the DRV. And the U.S. "must recognize the NFLSV as their (South Vietnam's) interlocuteur to solve all questions in South Vietnam."

Despite the seeming contradictions between U.S. and DRV stands, AFP's Raffaelli reported from Hanoi on 25 September that observers there felt a "step toward peace has seldom seemed as feasible as today, following the

proposals put forward by Goldberg and the reply by Pham Van Dong." Raffaelli felt the two men confined themselves to three key points: the four-point DRV stand, American raids over North Vietnam and representation for the NLF. He said Washington and Hanoi were still far apart on these points but at the same time, closer together than before -- particularly on the question of NLF representation at peace talks. Raffaelli also claimed "...Pham made a remarkable omission from the list of North Vietnam's conditions for peace. For the first time, there was no mention of the demand that American troops should be withdrawn from South Vietnam before negotiations can begin."

The NLF said Goldberg's proposals "brought forth no truly new factor" and "refuted the role of the NFLSV, which is the true and sole representative of the...South Vietnamese people." (Liberation Radio, 27 September)^{14/}

Peking interpreted Goldberg's speech as a new U.S. peace talk "swindle" in collusion with the "Soviet revisionist leading group." (NCNA, 25 September) Soviet Foreign Minister Gromyko, addressing the General Assembly on 23 September, said Goldberg's speech meant there were still no signs "...testifying to the seriousness of the intention of Washington to seek for a settlement...and to stop the aggression against the Vietnamese people." (New York Times, 23 September)

Couve de Murville, also at the UN, echoed French President De Gaulle's call for the U.S. to set up a schedule for withdrawal of its forces from Vietnam in an attempt to find a peaceful solution to the war. (New York Times, 28 September)

October 1966

In early October, U.S. bombing in the eastern part of the Demilitarized Zone was halted temporarily. On 11 October, the DRV Foreign Ministry called this a "deceitful maneuver and cunning trick." The spokesman claimed the U.S. intends "to use the International Commission to legalize their criminal acts" in the DMZ. Hanoi demanded all bombing raids and other military activities in the whole of the DMZ be halted by the U.S.

^{14/} On 15 September, Saigon's Vietnam Press quoted President Thieu as saying negotiations with the DRV are not possible now "because Hanoi still believes that it will be victorious." He said the GVN "does not advocate invading the North but whenever the situation requires, we may send troops over the 17th parallel." Thieu did not mention the NLF.

Peking called the bombing cessation a "clumsy trick" designed to "put across (the) big swindle of inducement to peace talks by a cessation of bombing" and accused the Soviet Union of collusion in the swindle. Joining Hanoi in charging the US with trying to enlist the services of the ICC, Peking observed that "the US has already torn the Geneva Agreements to shreds...Has it any more right to talk about supervision of the International Commission? (NCNA, 13 October)

At a 13 October press conference, PRESIDENT JOHNSON said he would be interested in a bombing pause if assurances were given that it would be reciprocated. He noted the lack of reciprocation during two earlier pauses and said US troops could not be asked to "stand there with their hands in their pockets" unless there is some sign that the other side would respond positively to a pause. (New York Times, 14 October)

Bombing in the eastern DMZ was resumed on October 14. The following day, the Vietnam People's Army high command sent a message to the ICC calling attention to this fact, claimed that the US had continued to step up military activity in the DMZ and thus the "US announced suspension of the bombing...is but a swindle aimed at deceiving world opinion." The message demanded cessation of all air raids and other military activities in the DMZ, a halt to bombing of North Vietnam and to aggression in the south.

Canadian EXTERNAL AFFAIRS MINISTER MARTIN said resumption of bombing in the DMZ "has dashed immediate hopes of military disengagement" and that Canada regrets this action. He added Canada and India agreed on the potential role for the ICC as a channel to get negotiations started. (Montreal Gazette, 21 October 1966)

BRITISH SIX POINTS: UK Foreign Secretary George Brown said (6 October) that USSR Foreign Minister Gromyko had declined his invitation to join in reconvening the Geneva Conference and Britain had decided to act alone. A fairly detailed six point plan for negotiations was announced.

First, Brown said a conference of parties to the war and other interested governments should meet as soon as possible. He saw no reason why the Viet Cong should not be represented and welcomed US assurances that this would not be an insurmountable problem. When the principle of holding a conference was accepted, but before it convened, US bombing should stop (to recommence only if the conference met, failed to accomplish anything and war resumed); both sides should de-escalate military activities; as soon as possible, a preliminary cease-fire should be declared. The conference could then begin to work for: a

permanent cease-fire; provisions for free elections and general amnesty for all; neutralization of North and South Vietnam; an agreement on a timetable for withdrawal of US and NVA troops from South Vietnam. All of this would be accomplished under international inspection and control. Finally, a strengthened ICC would have an international peace-keeping force at its disposal (as in Cyprus) to assure all that the final settlement was respected.

Hanoi "sternly rebuffed" the plan, called it "a rehash of US oft-repeated blackmail," claimed the UK "simply tried to conform to the obdurate stand of the United States which has not yet reconciled itself with recognizing the NFLSV as the sole and legal representative of the people in South Vietnam." The 8 October Nhan Dan article said provisions for free elections and an international peace-keeping force ran completely counter to the 1954 agreements.

The NLF denunciation of Brown's proposal followed similar lines: "Along with Johnson's and Goldberg's hypocritical utterances, Eisenhower's threat to use nuclear weapons and the absurd six-point proposal of the British Foreign Secretary George Brown, the pathetic call for peace issued by the above-mentioned people can only serve the war policy of the United States." (Liberation Press Agency, 9 October)

Peking scored the British plan -- as well as the Vatican peace appeal and U Thant's three point proposal. The Chinese claimed Brown's plan shifted the "criminal responsibility for the constant escalation" from the US to the DRV, "the victim of aggression," that it called for NFLSV participation in negotiations as "an independent party." Peking ridiculed the call for a political settlement based on Geneva because "the Geneva Agreement has already been torn up by the United States." (NCNA, 7 October)

Moscow said Brown's ideas were "bare of any constructive proposals for settling the Vietnam problem" and linked them to earlier Goldberg statements. As for calling a new conference, the broadcast said "old decisions should be first carried out. The Americans must stop their aggression and all foreign troops must be withdrawn from South Vietnam." (Radio Moscow, 6 October)

The US welcomed the British proposal for an immediate reconvening of the Geneva Conference on 11 October. Ambassador Goldberg said, "My government is prepared to discuss the constructive proposals of the Foreign Secretary as well as all other proposals."

POLAND and the SOVIET UNION, in a communique issued 16 October, "resolutely (condemned) the US aggressive actions in Vietnam," demanded implementation of the Geneva Accords, an unconditional and final halt to US bombing over North Vietnam and an end to US armed intervention in the south; withdrawal of all troops and dismantling of all military bases; recognition of the NFLSV (as the only true representative of the people of South Vietnam) and the possibility for the South Vietnamese to settle their own affairs themselves.

Speaking before the UN General Assembly on 18 October, HUNGARIAN FOREIGN MINISTER PETER said: "In the interests of negotiations and peace, the bombing of North Vietnam should be stopped without delay and without any threat of possible renewal...The withdrawal of US military bases and personnel should be properly guaranteed...(and) any proposal that does not give due consideration to the program of the National Liberation Front is directed against the true interests of the people of South Vietnam." A few days later, Peter gave a background briefing to the press in which he said the North Vietnamese could be expected to take any positive action toward negotiations as long as bombing of the DRV continued. If that stopped, he added, and "...the occasion arising, the DRV would be prepared to honor the Geneva Agreements, including the stipulations pertinent to the 17th degree of latitude." Peter claimed the NLF does not insist on presenting itself as the sole rightful representative of the Vietnamese people. And Peter reiterated a point made in his 18 October speech: withdrawal of US troops prior to negotiations is not required; adequate guarantees on eventual withdrawal are required. In response, AMBASSADOR GOLDBERG told the General Assembly (18 October) the US had received much advice on the cessation of bombing but "would like to know privately or publicly what would happen if we followed it." Goldberg repeated the US offer to engage in "immediate discussions - through private informal channels or through more formal negotiations;" he added the US considered principles underlying the Geneva Agreements as a basis for a peaceful and honorable settlement.

ROMANIAN PREMIER MAURER said the US could end the war and create conditions for a cessation of the conflict by immediately and unconditionally ending the bombing. (Bucharest AGERPRES, 28 October 1966)

The MANILA CONFERENCE of nations contributing troops to Vietnam met, 24-25 October. A communique declaring a determination to continue the defense of South Vietnam as well as a commitment to work for a peaceful settlement was signed by Australia, South Korea, New Zealand, the Philippines, Thailand, South Vietnam and the United States. The

Conference endorsed six essentials for peace presented by the GVN:

1. Cessation of aggression and externally supported terror;
2. Preservation of the territorial integrity of South Vietnam;
3. The partition of Vietnam will be respected until, by the free choice of all Vietnamese, reunification is achieved;
4. When aggression has stopped the South Vietnamese people will move rapidly toward a reconciliation of all elements;
5. As the military and subversive forces of North Vietnam are withdrawn, infiltration ceases and "the level of the violence thus subsides," the people of South Vietnam will ask their allies to remove their forces and evacuate their installations. (Participants said their forces shall be withdrawn as soon as possible - but no later than six months, after close consultation - as the other side withdraws northward, ceases infiltration and the "level of violence thus subsides ");
6. Any eventual settlement must include effective international guarantees.

Hanoi said the Manila Communique was a "demand for the Vietnamese people to lay down their arms and surrender," that the US urged the "South Vietnamese people to stop their struggle for independence and freedom and the North Vietnamese people cease supporting their southern compatriots." As it had during the weeks preceding Manila, Hanoi stressed the military complexion of the conference, claimed its real aim was to plan further escalation under the "camouflage" of seeking peace.

The NLF called Manila a "conference of criminal leaders" and the peace proposals "insolent." A Liberation Radio broadcast on 26 October said Thieu and Ky had no right to say anything on behalf of the South Vietnamese, that only the NFLSV, "the only legal representative of the South Vietnamese people, can have a decisive voice."

Peking said Manila was a "war council pure and simple" and the communique "smacked of gunpowder." (NCNA, 27 October)

Radio Moscow called the pledge for troop withdrawal "nothing more than empty words" and added it "is linked with numerous conditions and reservations" which amount to demanding the capitulation of "the patriotic forces of South Vietnam" before withdrawal of foreign troops will

even be considered. Moscow said the communique contained not "even the shadow of a hint" that the US would halt bombing nor any mention of (US) recognition of the NLF. Manila seemed to confirm "the US aggressors are proceeding along the same dangerous course of continuing military adventures in Southeast Asia." (Moscow Radio, 26 October)

A TRIPARTITE COMMUNIQUE was issued 24 October by INDIA, YUGOSLAVIA and the UAR, after a New Delhi meeting. These countries voiced concern over the dangerous situation in Southeast Asia, called for an immediate and unconditional end to bombing of North Vietnam and asserted "the implementation of the Geneva Agreements of 1954 and the withdrawal of all foreign troops would lead to peace." Nasser reportedly said if there were North Vietnamese Army troops in South Vietnam, they would have to withdraw along with the Americans, Koreans and others. The Communique said the NLF would have to participate as one of the main parties to any peace effort.

Hanoi and the NLF did not comment on either conference or communique. Peking, however, accused Mrs. Gandhi and Tito of trying to "peddle the peace fraud...concocted by the US and the Soviet Union" and labeled the Vietnam statements "a reproduction of U Thant's three-point 'peace proposal.'"

November 1966

DRV Representative in Paris, MAI VAN BO, said (7 November) the US should recognize the four points, prove its good faith by ending the bombing and other "war actions against the DRV" and recognize the NLF as the spokesman to solve all the questions in South Vietnam." Bo said the Geneva Accords are the "most logical and sensible position for a correct solution of the Vietnam problem and are not subject to haggling." The same line was taken by the NLF representative to the Albania Workers' Party Congress on 4 November.

In an interview between Wilfred Burchett and NLF Chief Nguyen Van Tho broadcast by Radio Havana (4 November), Tho said the broad NLF program could encompass other political, religious and patriotic organizations in South Vietnam. All would have to accept the program, he added. Conditions for a "correct political solution" listed by Tho included: (1) the US must cease aggression, withdraw all troops and dismantle all bases; (2) the US must respect the right of the South Vietnamese to settle their problems themselves -- including reunification; (3) the NFLSV, "the sole genuine representative of the South Vietnamese people must have its decisive place and voice in any political solution concerning South Vietnam."

Both Belgrade Tanyug (1 November) and Agence France-Presse Hanoi (3 November) noted reports that Hungarian FOREIGN MINISTER PETER had recently visited Hanoi. Some speculated Peter's mission was to establish some basis for peace talks.

Canada's PAUL MARTIN held talks in Warsaw in early November and met Soviet leaders in Moscow on 9 November. Martin later told the Canadian House of Commons he had suggested steps which might be taken "to lead us away from a military toward a political settlement."

Canadian diplomat CHESTER RONNING, in a 12 November speech said "North Vietnam will begin talks on no other basis but a cessation of the bombing...(which would)...pave the way for Russia to intervene and help provide a framework for negotiations." Ronning said the US would eventually have to withdraw troops but that this was not a pre-condition to negotiations.

A Le Monde report on the Bulgarian Party Congress (15 November) indicated some shifts in the positions held by several delegations. Bulgaria reportedly wanted immediate negotiations with no pre-conditions about cessation of bombing. Several démarches with the US and Hanoi had been tried but failed, allegedly because of the determining influence of pro-Chinese elements in the DRV ruling circle. But other reports from Sofia reflected virtually no change in attitudes.

French Parliamentarian J. DUHAMEL, interviewed by Agence France-Presse and Figaro, discussed his recent trip to Hanoi. Duhamel said he was convinced the US should stop bombing to "demonstrate their good faith when they speak of peace." He felt bombing stiffened Hanoi's determination to continue the war, said it did not frighten the North Vietnamese; transportation, although slowed, had not been interrupted. Duhamel felt America over-estimated Hanoi's war weariness. He quoted Pham Van Dong as saying, "We would like to make the United States understand that we will continue to fight as long as the US Government believes it can dominate us by force." And Duhamel said Nguyen Xuan Tran, Secretary General of the Vietnam Committee for Peace Movement had stated, "If we do not obtain the necessary pre-conditions, the US has the means of stepping up its aggression whereas we will have lost our fighting spirit." (Or: if negotiations are begun without clear pre-conditions it will be interpreted by the Vietnamese as a willingness to stop half-way.) (Agence France-Presse, 20 November; Figaro, 24-25 November)

At the conclusion of Czechoslovakian President Novotny's visit to India, a communique issued by the two governments demanded an immediate end to the bombing of North Vietnam and asserted a peaceful solution

should be sought within the 1954 Geneva framework. The CZECH-INDIAN communique said the Vietnamese have the right to decide their own future without outside interference. (This was different from earlier statements from neutral and East European sources in two ways. No attempt was made to blame the US-directly or by implication-for the situation in Vietnam. And the words "without pre-conditions" were omitted from the appeal to stop the bombings.)

December 1966

Circumstantial reports filed from two to five months after the event are the available public record of the POLISH INITIATIVE of December 1966. Robert Estabrook wrote that US Ambassador Lodge and the Polish ICC representative Lewandowski met in the home of the Italian ambassador in Saigon, on December 2 and 3. (Washington Post, 3 February 1967.) The Italian Communist Party organ, L'Unita (9 May 1967) said ten points of discussion in possible negotiations had been drafted by Lewandowski and the Italian ambassador as an exercise in diplomatic style. (The Italian Foreign Ministry confirmed this on 10 May 1967.) Lodge apparently felt the ten points had more than style: he forwarded them to Washington for immediate review. On about 4 December, Lodge asked Lewandowski to set up "contacts" with Hanoi. Polish FOREIGN MINISTER RAPACKI next sent word that Hanoi had approved the ten points for discussion and had agreed to unconditional talks on the ambassadorial level in Warsaw. (On 9 May, Belgrade Tanyug confirmed this outline of the peace efforts and said both sides had approved the ten points.)

Before talks could begin, however, US bombing over North Vietnam suddenly intensified: targets very close to the heart of Hanoi were struck - for the first time. On 13 and 14 December, a railroad yard six miles from Hanoi and a truck depot five miles from the city were hit. The bombing raids killed the chance for peace talks in Warsaw.

On 2 February, President Johnson said he was not "aware of any serious effort" toward negotiations, that there were no "serious indications." On 7 February, Prime Minister Wilson told the British House of Commons he knew of the December events and attributed failure to begin talks to "a very considerable two-way misunderstanding." Wilfred Burchett, writing from Hanoi, said talks were aborted by the bombings of December 13 and 14. (Washington Post, 8 February 1967)

A DRV statement of 15 December claimed the "frenzied bombings of Hanoi" exposed the US peace talk swindle as a move to "camouflage the new escalation of the criminal war of aggression." (VNA, 15 December)

Peking denounced the raids as part of the "peace talk plot" of the US and the USSR. (NCNA, 15 December) And a Soviet Government statement called the bombings "new evil deeds" which will lead to "further serious aggravation of the international situation."

Canadian Secretary Martin said his government had been trying to promote the extension of the Christmas truce but that efforts had been made more difficult by recent US bombing of the Hanoi area. (Canadian Broadcasting System, 16 December)

POPE PAUL VI appealed for an extension of the then-announced Christmas and New Year truces on 8 December. He hoped "...this truce becomes an armistice...the armistice...the occasion for sincere negotiations...which will lead to peace." U Thant endorsed the Pope's appeal; the White House said the US Government fully shares the desire of the Pope for a peaceful solution and "his suggestions have always received sympathetic consideration on our part, as will his most recent proposal." (8 December)

The NLF reacted negatively. A Liberation Radio broadcast (10 December) implied the Pope's proposal was meant to take advantage of the Front's original "humanitarian" offer for a Christmas cease-fire. Peking noted the Pope's call but commented that he has "always served US imperialism in its peace talk swindles." (NCNA, 15 December) Hanoi said nothing.

In a 19 December letter to U Thant, AMBASSADOR GOLDBERG referred to Pope Paul's appeal and asked the Secretary General to take all possible steps "to bring about the necessary discussions" which could lead to a cease-fire. Goldberg said the US would cooperate fully with Thant in the attempt to start discussions promptly and end them successfully.

Peking said the Goldberg letter was a virtual confession that the US was pursuing its "despicable scheme of forcing peace talks through bombing," called it "undisguised and shameless blackmail" and criticized U Thant for again serving the US "peace talks fraud." There was no official comment from either Hanoi or the Front. However the Agence France-Presse correspondent in Hanoi reported on 22 December that the DRV was distrustful of any US peace proposal and specifically, Ambassador Goldberg's letter to U Thant. The fact this proposal followed a week of bombing raids on Hanoi made the DRV think the US was using intimidation to force it to negotiate on US conditions.

The official YUGOSLAV Party paper, Borba, saw a "ray of hope" in Goldberg's proposal and felt at last there might "be a change in the American point of view." The paper said the best indication of US

goodwill would be an end to bombing of North Vietnam. (Belgrade Tanyug, 20 December)

Radio WARSAW (22 December) reported U Thant had undertaken a new -- and strictly private -- mediation initiative. The commentary said it was rumored that U Thant had presented proposals to the NLF through the Algerian Ambassador to the UN; proposals included an extension of the cease-fire, NLF participation in talks, and others.

U THANT replied to the Goldberg letter on 30 December. He stated his strong belief that his three point program, "of which the cessation of the bombing of North Vietnam is the first and essential part, is necessary to create the possibility of fruitful discussions leading to a just and honorable settlement of the problem of Vietnam on the basis of the Geneva Agreements of 1954." He urged the US to stop the bombing "even without conditions."

MAI VAN BO, on 5 January 1967, said his government "rejects all intervention by the United Nations in the Vietnam affair for the good reason that this intervention would be contrary to the Geneva Agreements" of 1954. The same day, Peking called U Thant "another lackey of US imperialism" and said his letter contained "the same stuff pulled out of Johnson's portfolio." (NCNA, 5 January)

Pravda, discussing the letters and rumors of U Thant's new initiative, said if the US "unconditionally ceases the bombing of North Vietnam and if all sides extend the New Year cease-fire" there "might follow some favorable developments." (TASS, 31 December)

MR. GOLDBERG then responded to U Thant's letter. On 31 December, Goldberg wrote the US was willing to cease bombing North Vietnam "the moment there is an assurance, private or otherwise, that there would be a reciprocal response toward peace from North Vietnam." He noted that an end to the conflict cannot be attained by appeals for restraint by one side, welcomed the idea of an extended holiday cease-fire but regretted the "other parties concerned have shown no interest so far in such a cease-fire." (New York Times, 1 January 1967) ..

British Foreign Secretary BROWN, on 30 December, proposed a three-day meeting of the US, DRV and GVN to arrange a cessation of hostilities. He offered to make facilities available in any suitable British territory and to help with preparatory work. Pope Paul VI welcomed the proposal; President Johnson said he was "delighted to have (Britain's) views and their suggestions." He added the US was "rather anxious to meet...anywhere, any time, that Hanoi is willing to come to a conference table." (1 January 1967 press conference) Hanoi, again, called the British proposal a rehash of the "deceitful shopworn clamor of the US imperialists," condemned Brown's failure to include the NLF as a participant at the proposed conference and claimed the initiative ran counter to Britain's responsibilities as Geneva

Co-Chairman. (VNA, 3 January 1967) The NLF echoed Hanoi's feelings on 4 January; Peking called Brown's suggestion a "new trick of the great peace talk conspiracy..." (NCNA, 5 January 1967)

January 1967

On 2 January 1967, New York Times man HARRISON SALISBURY interviewed PHAM VAN DONG in Hanoi. Dong stressed the four points were not to be considered as "conditions" for peace talks but as providing a "basis of settlement of the Vietnam problem." He added that they were to be understood as "valid conclusions for discussion," or matters for discussion. The "big question is to reach a settlement which can be enforced," he said, adding it was up to Washington to make the first step. (New York Times, 4, 8 January)

The Vietnam News Agency clarified one part of Pham Van Dong's statement on 6 January, saying the Premier "actually told Mr. Salisbury 'the four-point stand of the DRV constitutes the basis of a settlement of the Vietnam problem.'"

On 5 January, MAI VAN BO said if the US stopped bombing his country "definitively and unconditionally," Hanoi would "examine and study" American proposals for negotiations to end the war. He said the US "must first recognize the NFLSV, which is the only authentic representative of the South Vietnamese people, to negotiate with them and settle all questions of South Vietnam." He said, "Hanoi insists that the US recognize the four point program as a basis for a settlement of the Vietnam problem and demonstrate its goodwill by stopping the bombing of NVN definitively and without conditions."

New York Times, 6 January

Tokyo's Akahata, 1 January, published Ho Chi Minh's written reply to questions submitted previously. Ho was quoted as saying "any measure to settle the Vietnam problem should be based on the DRV's four point proposal and the NFLSV's five-point proposal." Ho said the recent bombings and increased troop commitments were an intensification and expansion of the war indicating the fraudulent nature of US peace initiatives.

On 3 January, the German magazine Der Spiegel ran answers from Ho Chi Minh to another set of questions. Der Spiegel wrote the DRV President had said for peace to be "immediately established," the US must withdraw her troops and those of

US satellites, stop bombing "unconditionally and forever"
and respect the national rights of the Vietnamese people.

U THANT, in a 10 January speech, described the National Liberation Front as an "independent entity analogous to the Liberation Front of Algeria. He said, "there will be no move toward peace so long as the bombing of North Vietnam is going on." Thant disputed the domino theory and said there were "basic differences" of approach, concept, even assessment, between himself and the United States. (New York Times, 11 January)

The New York Times of 26 January reported diplomatic sources had said the US had quietly made informal but direct contacts with political representatives of the NLF. Contacts were probably in Cairo, perhaps other capitals as well. Sources reportedly said the discussions had failed to produce any tangible progress on significant issues and added they believed prisoner of war problems were among issues taken up in talks.

On 28 January, Australian journalist WILFRED BURCHETT reported on an interview with DRV Foreign Minister NGUYEN DUY TRINH. Burchett wrote Trinh appeared "conciliatory," that he had said the DRV four points were a basis for discussion -- not demands or conditions. The four points were called the "basis for the most correct political solution to the Vietnam problem." Trinh said his government would talk "only after the unconditional cessation of US bombing" and other acts of war against North Vietnam. He made no demand about the situation in South Vietnam, no demand that the US recognize the NLF, Burchett reported. And, according to Burchett, Trinh implied that the four points took precedence over the more hard-line, five-point stand of the NFLSV. Nhan Dan reiterated the Trinh proposals on 29 January.

On 30 January, HUYNH TAN PHAT, vice president of the NLF Presidium said the Front "fully approves and supports this correct stand and attitude (Trinh's statements) of good will..." But Phat did not mention Trinh's references to talks; he differed from Trinh's statement that the four points were the only correct basis for a Vietnam settlement by adding the NLF five points as part of that correct basis. By stressing the unity of North and South Vietnam and talking of familiar Front demands (withdrawal of US troops, recognition of the NLF, and so on) Phat presented a less "conciliatory" stand. Some interpreters felt Phat implied a fear that Trinh had signified Hanoi's willingness to stop supporting the Front and to go it alone at peace talks with the US. They felt Phat, by reiterating long-familiar and fairly hard demands, tried to head-off such a move. (VNA, 31 January)

Two other statements were pertinent to the Trinh interview. Speaking at a Phnom Penh press conference, DRV Representative to Cambodia Nguyen Thuy Vu said "if the US unconditionally ceases its bombing and

all other acts of war against North Vietnam, in such condition, there could be conversations between the DRV and the United States." DRV Ambassador to the UAR, NGUYEN XUAN, said if the US really wanted to hold talks or make direct contacts with North Vietnam it must unconditionally stop its air raids and hostilities against the DRV. (London Reuters, 3 February; Cairo MENA, 1, 2 February)

February 1967

At a press conference, 2 February, PRESIDENT JOHNSON said "just almost any step" would be enough to warrant the suspension of US bombing of North Vietnam. The President said bombing would stop if North Vietnam reduced its assistance to the South: "We are looking for a sign" that they are ready to do so. But he also said: "I am not aware of any serious effort that the other side has made, in my judgment, to bring the fighting to a stop and to stop the war." He reaffirmed the "deep interest of the United States in a prompt and peaceful settlement of all the problems in Southeast Asia." (Washington Post, February 3)

A Nhan Dan "Commentator" article said President Johnson's press conference remarks showed "he still refused to end definitively and unconditionally the bombing of the DRV...but also arrogantly put conditions for the ending of the bombing." Commentator said the recent statements of Ho Chi Minh, Pham Van Dong and Nguyen Duy Trinh have won wide world support; the article called Trinh's statement "full of good will," one which "corresponds to reason." Nhan Dan reaffirmed Trinh's pronouncement that "only after the US ends definitively and unconditionally the bombing and all other acts of war against the DRV can there be talks between the DRV and the United States." (VNA, 5 February)

Another "Commentator" article denounced the US for failing to "give up their sinister designs" even in the face of the "Vietnamese people's good will." It repeated Trinh's statement on the possibility of talks if the bombing ceased and blamed President Johnson's February 2 press conference statements as a demonstration of "US obduracy."

Burchett, writing from Hanoi on 6 February for Tokyo's Yomiuri said "Hanoi feels that it has opened the door with Nguyen Duy Trinh's statement and that it is up to Washington to make the next move." He said "observers in Hanoi" stress any political settlement should be based on the DRV's four points and these points "contain important concessions which should make a face-saving American withdrawal possible." Burchett condemned President Johnson's statements of 2 February as a sign

that "US peace offers are empty words" but concluded by saying "Hanoi is confident it has demonstrated its good will and is still hoping, despite Johnson's press conference remarks, that Washington will show some modicum of good will."

Soviet commentators emphasized the sincerity and significance of Trinh's statement. A TASS report from Hanoi said "legitimate indignation in Hanoi met President Johnson's statement of February 2 that he allegedly did not see any efforts by the DRV Government for the attainment of peace in Vietnam." TASS said the President "essentially ignored" Trinh's statement. (TASS, 4 February)

In The Washington Post of 8 February, Burchett reported that Foreign Minister Trinh said if the bombings cease completely, good and favorable conditions will be created for the talks. "President Johnson said he was only awaiting a sign. Well, he's had the sign," TRINH ADDED.

Indian FOREIGN MINISTER CHAGLA (8 February) issued a statement calling for an extension of the Tet cease-fire "indefinitely and unconditionally;" he appealed to the US to "stop bombing North Vietnam unconditionally and indefinitely." Chagla said "the Government of India notes with satisfaction" Trinh's statement on the possibility of negotiations once the bombing is stopped. (New York Times, 9 February)

An Izvestiya commentator wrote, "The DRV has declared its readiness to start negotiations on a peaceful settlement of the conflict in Vietnam." He said, the "termination of American air raids on DRV territory would be a signal of a reverse process - limiting the scope of military operations and, finally, of their complete cessation." (TASS, 12 February)

And in a 10 February speech, Poland's GOMULKA declared the first step toward a negotiated settlement in Vietnam should be the "unconditional cessation of bombing of North Vietnam." (Warsaw News Service, 10 February)

A Burchett story for the Associated Press ran in the Washington Evening Star, 10 February. Burchett said Trinh's statements to him revealed the DRV's four points are not preconditions to negotiations. He claimed the four points actually contained concessions when compared to the 1954 Geneva Agreements. The Geneva Agreements called for reunification by 1956, whereas the four points "makes an important concession on the indefinite postponement of reunification." Burchett added the

"four points were specifically formulated to facilitate American disengagement." He said the Front's representative in Hanoi said that negotiations between Hanoi and the Ky Government are an impossibility, since the latter is considered as representing no national interests or any sections of the population. When asked by a Czech newsman about what would be discussed if talks between the DRV and the US actually take place, Burchett replied the talks would deal with the four points. He reiterated that the four points contain compromises which would "give the United States a face-saving way out of its own dilemma in Vietnam." (Prague Domestic Service, February 6, reported the Czech news radio talk with Burchett.)

At the same time, Robert Estabrook reported for the Washington Post that an EASTERN EUROPEAN PLAN FOR SETTLEMENT was said to be acceptable to Hanoi. The first phase of the plan would include a cessation of bombing, and the formation of a caretaker government in the south composed of representatives of the Ky government, the Front and other groups including the Buddhists. Following internationally supervised elections in South Vietnam, a new government would be formed to discuss future relationships with the United States, Ky and the NFLSV. Estabrook said the communist diplomat who told him of the plan said Hanoi is agreeable, but he saw some difficulty obtaining the consent of the Front. (Washington Post, February 3)

(On 6 February, Paris radio reported the DRV delegate general in Paris had denied a Newsweek story that the North Vietnamese had passed a message to Senator Robert F. Kennedy through the Quai d'Orsay. Both the Quai and the US Embassy in Paris also denied the story.)

POPE PAUL VI appealed for negotiations and peace in messages sent to Washington, Hanoi and Saigon on 7 February. In his letter to President Johnson, the Pope hoped the Tet Truce "may open finally the way to the negotiations for a just and stable peace," and asked that "in these days of truce," efforts for peace be increased. President Johnson, replying 8 February, said he shared these wishes of the Pope, but added that the US could not "reduce military action unless the other side is willing to do likewise" and consider a "balanced reduction in military activity." (Washington Post, 9 February)

Ho Chi Minh's reply to Pope Paul condemned the US for the "monstrous crimes" committed in Vietnam, for violating the Geneva agreements and for seriously menacing peace in Asia and the world. He said peace can be restored in Vietnam if the US ends "unconditionally and definitively the bombing and all other acts of war against the DRV, withdraws from South Vietnam all US and satellite troops, recognizes the NFLSV and lets the Vietnamese people settle themselves their own affairs." He asked the Pope to use his influence to urge the US to respect the rights of the Vietnamese people. (New York Times, 14 February)

A truce honoring the Lunar New Year (Tet) went into effect on 8 February. A cease-fire in ground action in South Vietnam and cessation of bombing over North Vietnam lasted through 13 February. During this time, SOVIET PREMIER KOSYGIN was in London for talks with PRIME MINISTER WILSON.

On 8 February, KOSYGIN said the:

"Soviet Government considers that now, as in 1954, Great Britain, jointly with the Soviet Union and other countries, could make her contribution to the settlement of the Vietnam question on the basis of the Geneva agreements, which must be observed by the United States of America." He continued, "...the first step in this direction should be an unconditional cessation of American bombing and all other aggressive acts against the DRV." Kosygin observed that according to the DRV Foreign Minister, this step is necessary "to enable talks between the DRV and the US to take place," and concluded that the "Soviet Union welcomes this statement (Trinh's statement) and regards it as an important and constructive proposal for ending the war." In the question period following the speech, the Soviet Premier continued his strong praise and endorsement of Trinh's statement. (New York Times, 9 February)^{15/}

In Kosygin-Wilson talks on 16 February, Kosygin reportedly said his government was willing to encourage North Vietnam to de-escalate if the US would cease for good its bombing of the DRV.

DEAN RUSK said there had been some diminution of North Vietnamese support to South Vietnam recently, but not of a magnitude to carry "political consequences." Rusk demanded "elementary reciprocity" from Hanoi. (9 February press conference)

On 8 February, a letter from PRESIDENT JOHNSON was sent (via Moscow) to HO CHI MINH. Ho received it on 10 February and replied on 15 February. The correspondence was secret until 21 Mar (the time of the Guam Conference) when Hanoi released both letters. The exchange ties in with the

^{15/} Some observers say the Soviet Union associated itself with this "one-point" negotiating position (stop the bombing) because it had something to do with bringing it about. Burchett feels many Soviet bloc countries had urged Hanoi to accept this view for over a year, but that Hanoi had refused because it would have looked like weakness to the US and would have invited intensification of bombing raids.

Tet Truce, Kosygin-Wilson talks in London, appeals for negotiations from Pope Paul and U Thant and other moves.*

PRESIDENT JOHNSON's letter to Ho Chi Minh stated the North Vietnamese demands for "direct bilateral talks with representatives of the US Government provided that we cease 'unconditionally' and permanently our bombing operations against your country and all military actions against it." Johnson noted this position had been confirmed in the last days by "serious and responsible" parties. (Perhaps Kosygin) But the President said two reasons made this position unacceptable: a halt in the bombing would tell the world that discussions were going on and impair the "privacy and secrecy" needed for talks; secondly, North Vietnam could use a halt to "improve its military position" in South Vietnam. Apparently to offset these drawbacks, President Johnson offered an alternative. He said, "I am prepared to order a cessation of bombing against your country and the stopping of further augmentation of US forces in South Vietnam as soon as I am assured that infiltration into South Vietnam by land and by sea has stopped." ^{16/}

DEAN RUSK presented basically the same position at the 9 February press conference mentioned above. He said North Vietnam "...must not expect us to stop our military action by bombing while they continue their military action by invasion." It is evident, he continued, that there has been "a systematic campaign by the Communist side to bring about the unconditional and permanent cessation of the bombing of North Vietnam without any corresponding military action on their side in exchange for the possibility of talks -- talks which are thus far formless and without content." The Secretary said "we have been trying in every way known to us to invite and to engage in such talks, but unfortunately I cannot report to you today any tangible forward movement in this direction." (Department of State Press Release, February 9)

16/ Two questions are posed by critics: If a halt in bombing was unacceptable because it would impair the secrecy apparently necessary for discussions, would not a bombing halt plus a halt to North Vietnamese infiltration also impair secrecy? Would the world be more deceived by the US proposal than by Hanoi's?

And: Is it possible that both sides could improve their military positions in South Vietnam with or without a bombing halt? It is argued that although North Vietnam might try by all means to improve its military position during a truce -- as it did during Tet, according to US reports -- Hanoi could not improve it so much as to change the balance of military power in South Vietnam. It is further argued that fewer American lives might be lost by risking an improvement in North Vietnam's military position to get negotiations started.

*See "Addenda" for account of the Ashmore-Baggs mission to Hanoi (mid-January 1967), Ashmore letter to Ho Chi Minh (4 February 1967), Ashmore charge that the Administration negated his peace feeler (September 1967) and Assistant Secretary Bundy's comments on the episode.

In a speech at Howard University on February 10, AMBASSADOR GOLDBERG analyzed Hanoi's conditions for a Vietnam settlement and concluded that the most difficult aspects for the US were the DRV's demand that the internal affairs of the South be settled according to the program of the NFLSV, and Ho Chi Minh's subsequent but related demand that the US recognize the Front as the "sole genuine representative" of the South Vietnamese people and engage in negotiations with it. He reiterated his September 22 pledge that the US is prepared to order a cessation of the bombing if assured of a reciprocal response from the other side and renewed the US commitment to participate unconditionally in either private or public negotiations. (New York Times, February 11)

The same day, U THANT appealed for an extension of the Tet cease-fire and an end to the US bombing of North Vietnam as the first step toward the conference table to end the war. He reiterated his conviction that adoption of his three-point plan would "bring about a favorable climate for peaceful talks between the parties." (New York Times, February 11)

PEKING denounced Secretary Rusk's February 9 news conference and Ambassador Goldberg's Howard speech. Peking labeled Rusk's statement "bellicose" and designed to further the US policy of inducing "peace talks" by halting bombing, "a policy to subjugate the Vietnamese people." It claimed Goldberg's speech pressed the DRV to back down from its "resolute and just four-point stand" and surrender. Both broadcasts repeated the standard Chinese formula for settlement; withdrawal of US troops. (NCNA, 10, 11 February)

Kosygin and Wilson asked for -- and won -- a two day extension of the Tet cease-fire and bombing halt on 10 February. (A DRV Foreign Ministry statement called this "a deceitful trick" and a "US ultimatum insolently requiring the Vietnamese people to accept negotiations under US terms.") Reportedly, messages were exchanged between Washington and Hanoi through London. On 13 February, the last day of the then six-day truce, Wilson gave Kosygin the final, formal US offer to Hanoi. The proposal offered an end to bombing in exchange for a cessation of North Vietnamese assistance to the NLF, according to British and French press reports. Kosygin relayed the proposal to Hanoi and allegedly recommended Hanoi accept it. Hanoi did not: whether the DRV rejected or simply refused to reply to the US note is not clear.

Also on 13 February, bombing of North Vietnam resumed. President Johnson said North Vietnam had used the truce for a major resupply effort of their troops in South Vietnam. (Budapest News Service report from Hanoi (15 February) said foreign observers there were disappointed the US had resumed bombing because there had been hope that the "very positive proposal" made by the DRV "may make the Americans see reason.")

On 14 February, Ho Chi Minh's reply to the earlier Papal appeal for peace was released. Ho hewed closely to the NLF's (hard) terms for final settlement - not talks. There is little similarity between the tone of Ho Chi Minh's letter and Foreign Minister Trinh's "conciliatory" statement of two weeks before.^{17/}

Apparently, three days elapsed between Ho Chi Minh's receiving President Johnson's letter and the US resumption of bombing. Bombing resumed two days before Ho's 15 February reply to the President was made. In his letter, Ho demanded that to start negotiations, the US must halt bombing of North Vietnam; to restore peace, the US must stop bombing and other acts of war against North Vietnam, withdraw US and satellite troops from South Vietnam, recognize the NLFSV and permit the South Vietnamese to settle their own affairs themselves. Essentially, he repeated the original DRV four point and NLFSV five point stands.

Prime Minister WILSON, describing the joint efforts for finding a Vietnam settlement exerted during the Kosygin visit, told the British public on February 14 that "last weekend I believe peace was almost within our grasp: one single, simple act of trust could have achieved it." He elaborated that "the gesture by North Vietnam, which would have cost them nothing in terms of security, or even face, could have set in motion events which could have led to peace." Wilson said that although they had failed in this instance, the UK and the Soviet Union would continue to work together to assist in achieving a settlement. (New York Times, 15 February)

HANOI, MOSCOW, PEKING and others were vocal in their criticism of US resumption of bombing over North Vietnam. A Nhan Dan "Commentator" article blasted the US for its failure to respond to Trinh's request "that the United States stop its air raids against North Vietnam, so as to create favorable conditions for talks between the two sides." After

^{17/} It was speculated that the NLF - closer to Peking's line than Hanoi - had won this round, that the Front had objected to Trinh's January statement and had followed Hanoi's lead unwillingly. When the 13 February bombing resumption "proved" the NLF was right in asserting that talks were impossible and that everything must be done to "rid South Vietnamese of US influence," pro-Chinese elements in the DRV leadership, together with the Front, established (or re-established) a dominant policy-making position. Had the US "seized" the opportunity offered by Trinh, would NLF dissent have been able to prevent negotiations? Critics of Administration policy say no; supporters argue Trinh offered no substantial opportunity. It is hard to tell. But the US actions seemed to have eliminated any chance of learning the answer to the question.

listing US public statements concerning a desire for unconditional negotiations it added "but as soon as the DRV Government declared that the two sides could have a talk after the United States had stopped for good and unconditionally its bombing of North Vietnam, it (the US) immediately changed its language." The article asserted all US protestations of willingness to talk "are merely aimed at fooling the people of the world and the American people and covering up their escalation acts." A February 15 Nhan Dan editorial scored the US for demanding a reciprocal act from the other side for a cessation of bombing. It asserted "by this it wanted to use military pressure to force people to talk with them." (VNA, 15 and 16 February)

On 1 March, Nhan Dan accused the US of "changing its tune." The article said in January, McNamara had said the US would be willing to stop the bombing "without any action on their part preceding it, with no firm guarantee as to what they would do, but with just some general indication of how they would act." Yet when "...Trinh showed the DRV Government's goodwill to be ready to talk with the US on the condition that the latter stop definitively and unconditionally its bombing raids and other acts of war against the DRV, the Johnson clique immediately changed its tune and in response...escalated further." Nhan Dan said Trinh had expressed this goodwill in the Burchett interview. It claimed the US was trying to force the "Vietnamese people to hold negotiations under (US) conditions," said this could not happen and asserted "the best alternative for the US is to recognize the four-point stand of the DRV Government." (VNA, 1 March 1967)

SOVIET press response to the bombing resumption was one of disappointment that the US failed to accept Trinh's proposal. One item criticized the President for ignoring the DRV's constructive proposals, another reported on the critical disappointment expressed by various prominent American and foreign politicians. A story from Hanoi characterized as a deliberate lie the attempt by the US to justify the bombing on the grounds that Hanoi had showed no effort toward a peaceful settlement. In this connection, it referred to Trinh's statement, and a series of "other serious steps," as well as to Ho Chi Minh's reply to Pope Paul. Kosygin, Podgorny, and Brezhnev stressed the importance of Trinh's statement in speeches given during early March. Kosygin called it "an extremely important peaceful initiative" and castigated the United States for failing to respond. He said the recent escalation showed the US is not interested in peace. Kosygin also accused the Chinese Communists of "disregarding" Trinh's statement. Podgorny said the "Mao Tse-tung group is opposed to the proposal and... its designs in connection with the war in Vietnam do not correspond with the views of the DRV Government." (Moscow Radio, 6, 9, 10 March)

A February 17 Nhan Dan commentary bitterly attacked British Prime Minister Wilson for his activities in support of the US in Vietnam and specifically for his speech of February 14 before Parliament. It accused the British statesman of declaring he would use his influence to try to check a new escalation in Vietnam, but of then supporting the "US air war of destruction against the DRV." It declared the British were not discharging their responsibilities as co-chairman of the Geneva Conference and accused Wilson of "playing the role of a cheaply paid advertiser of the Johnson clique's peace negotiation farce." (VNA, February 17)

A story in the British Communist Party daily, Morning Star, dated Hanoi, reported a DRV Foreign Ministry spokesman declared his government is ready to start negotiations as soon as the US permanently halts its bombing of North Vietnam. The dispatch, signed by a British subject teaching English in Hanoi, said the spokesman, in an exclusive interview, told her "let the bombing of the north stop definitively and talks could commence, without however any suggestion that Hanoi will budge one total (sic) from the four-point stand which is the only basis for a correct settlement." The Morning Star also quoted the NFLSV representative in Hanoi as stating the Front might soon form its own "provisional government." (Paris AFP, February 17)

In the most lengthy and authoritative COMMUNIST CHINESE comment on the current Vietnam negotiations situation, People's Daily Observer said the present Vietnam situation is at a "critical juncture" with a "major new conspiracy attempting to stifle the Vietnamese people's... struggle." The article blasted the recent Kosygin visit to England as part of the plot to "promote the 'peace negotiations' fraud of the United States." Observer said a US cessation of bombing is not a solution for the war and the only remedy for the Vietnam problem is a complete US pullout. It claimed the US had previously said if there were only a hint of an agreement to talk peace, the US would be able to stop the bombing, but "now they are clamoring for a 'reciprocal' principle." The article described the US military situation in Vietnam as desperate and concluded by pledging the support of the Chinese people to Vietnam. (NCNA, February 20)

INDIAN FOREIGN MINISTER CHAGLA said the US had hinted that even if there were "a whisper" from Hanoi of a positive response, the bombing would be halted. Chagla said Hanoi's response was "more than a whisper...it was a shout, as loud as you can possibly expect from the other side." Chagla asserted the Trinh statement constituted a definite shift in the position of Hanoi and the Front since they no longer insisted on all the pre-conditions they had laid down earlier for going to the conference table. (Hindustan Times, February 20)

In a conversation with New York Times' reporters on February 22, MAI VAN BO said the recent Trinh statement on the possibility of negotiations was an important gesture of good will toward the United States. He repeated over and over again that the halt of US bombing had to be "permanent and unconditional" because any cessation which was not clearly labeled "permanent and unconditional" would leave the "threat of bombing" intact and thus would constitute an unacceptable interference with the negotiations. Asked how a distinction could be made between a temporary and a permanent halt to bombing, he replied the US would have to declare at the outset that the halt was "permanent and unconditional." Bo said the Trinh offer constituted a basic change in DRV policy and added that the US demonstrated bad faith in its response. He said the four points were "the most correct solution to the Vietnam problem, and that the DRV regarded the NLFV as the only "authentic representative" of the South Vietnamese people; thus peace could only come about if the US settled South Vietnamese problems with the Front. In a speech on February 24, Cambodia's Prince SIHANOUK stated Mai Van Bo had asked him to clarify that "the only condition the DRV poses for eventual conversations between North Vietnam and the United States is a definitive and unconditional cessation of bombing of North Vietnam, because the North Vietnamese will not talk under duress. As for the American demand for reciprocity in de-escalation, Mai Van Bo gave me the following explanation: 'it would be impossible for the Government of Hanoi to stop helping and aiding its brothers in the South who must liberate themselves from invasion and American occupation.'" (New York Times, 23, 24 February)

During a television interview on February 22, AMBASSADOR HARRIMAN said "there's some indication that they're (Hanoi) coming around to a point where they may be willing to talk, and it looks at the moment as if it's more apt to be private discussions rather than something that would be public." Asked whether the US would be prepared to accept the Front as an equal in negotiations, he replied that should there be a formal public peace conference, "we will not, of course, accept them as a government" but "they could come with Hanoi." (New York Times, February 23)

In late February, Hanoi protested to the ICC about US artillery bombardment across the DMZ (called a "new and extremely serious step of war escalation"); on 1 March, Nhan Dan termed the Viet Cong attacks on Danang and movement of (North Vietnamese) guns south of the DMZ as "reasonable reciprocity" for the new escalation steps taken by the U.S. The NLFV representative to the DRV (28 February) called the "Johnson clique's" talk of peace a "mere hoax" and said the real US aim was to "cling to South Vietnam at any cost and perpetually partition Vietnam."

The envoy said the US "attitude is always to continue bombing" and intensify the war -- as was done in response to the Front's "humane" Tet suspension of hostilities and the DRV's "good will" as expressed by Trinh. The press conference ended with the Front representative extending "all-out support to the just stand and good will attitude of the DRV government."

Wilfred Burchett (28 February dispatch from Phnom Penh) said the statement "presumably was timed" to coincide with the arrival in Rangoon of a delegation from Hanoi. Burchett noted "for the first time at this level the NFLSV Central Committee says it entirely supports the correct position of North Vietnam." Burchett claimed the Danang shelling was designed to demonstrate that "escalation can be a two-way street" and concluded by saying that "implicit in commentaries in the Vietnamese press and evident in private conversation (are) emotions ranging from surprise to bitterness that what was considered a very independent gesture -- to find an end to the thread which could lead to talks and concrete results -- has been misinterpreted and the response has been the most violent steps of escalation since the decision to start bombing was taken."

A DRV delegation to Rangoon headed by Colonel Ha Van Lau, Chief of the North Vietnamese Liaison Mission to the ICC, arrived 28 February. U Thant was also there. Thant said he knew of the mission's arrival but declined comment when asked if it had come to meet with him. (New York Times, February 28) On 2 March in Rangoon, however, U Thant said he had met with the DRV delegation as a private citizen, not as Secretary General of the UN, denied having received a message from Ho Chi Minh and said "it is difficult for anyone to be optimistic (about peace) for the moment." Speaking in New York the next day, U Thant said the key to peace rests with the US and unless the US stops bombing unconditionally the war will be "prolonged and bloody." He said he was more convinced than ever that the "cessation of bombing of North Vietnam alone will bring about useful and meaningful talks." As a result of talks in Rangoon, U Thant said he had concluded "peace is not yet in sight."

Senator Kennedy recommended the US stop bombing to test DRV intentions in a 2 March Senate speech. He suggested a one week time limit be set, that an international group inspect borders and ports and report any further escalation. Mr. RUSK replied "there is no reason to believe at this time that Hanoi is interested in proposals for a mutual de-escalation such as those put forward by Senator Kennedy." (New York Times, 3 March)

March 1967

INDONESIA, on 6 March, announced it would send an ambassador to Hanoi to achieve a peaceful settlement of the Vietnam war. Foreign Minister Malik said he was confident the US would be willing to withdraw troops after achieving a bilateral agreement, that the DRV will be willing to negotiate after the US stops bombing the north. On 15 March, however, Malik said "we do not want to be named mediator because we do not want to be caught in a difficult situation." He said "our opinion and that of other Asian states is that the US must first stop bombing if peace negotiations are to be initiated because, of course, the other side does not want to negotiate if the US is still bombing them."

Peking cited reports from Djakarta which reportedly revealed the US had "recently brought in the notorious Indonesian rightwing military regime...to help them put over their peace talks fraud." Radio Peking denounced Malik for his statement of belief that the US really seeks a peaceful settlement in Vietnam. (NCNA, March 16)

According to an AFP report from Hanoi (March 9), the NLF representative there was pessimistic about chances for an early peace because he felt the US wanted to "settle the Vietnamese conflict by arms" and therefore, "we have no choice but to fight until final victory." He reportedly said the Vietcong would agree to the gradual withdrawal of US forces if a peaceful settlement is reached and spoke of a "transitional period" after the war during which there would be separate governments in North and South Vietnam. He said the NLF wanted a "neutral, national coalition of the broadest base representing the most diverse tendencies, ...but all with one common objective: getting rid of the US aggressors."

PRESIDENT JOHNSON made a major foreign policy speech in Nashville on 15 March. He said the US is "ready at any time for discussions of the Vietnam problem or any related matter, with any government or governments, if there is any reason to believe that these discussions will in any way seriously advance the cause of peace." He also stated "we also stand ready to advance toward a reduction of hostilities without prior agreement. The road to peace could go from deeds to discussions or it could start with discussions and go to deeds." He stressed the importance of the principal of reciprocity, saying the "United States cannot and will not reduce its activities unless and until there is some reduction on the other side." (New York Times, March 16)

To this the DRV Foreign Ministry responded by calling "gangster logic" the US demand for reciprocity in terminating the bombing. A spokesman said Johnson's speech "showed that the US ruling circles were dead set about continuing to occupy South Vietnam"... it repeated the

shopworn deceitful contentions about peace." Hanoi said "to demand a de-escalation and cease-fire at a time when half a million American troops are occupying South Vietnam is to demand that the Vietnamese people surrender to the aggressors." The upcoming Guam Conference was called a "summit war council which will discuss the intensification and expansion of the war in a more serious manner."

The NLF, Soviets and Chinese joined Hanoi in condemning the Guam Conference (20-21 March). All called it a war council, claimed new escalation would be planned (Radio Moscow said "a new stage in the escalation" would be discussed and castigated the US for ignoring the "statement made by the DRV Government about its readiness to negotiate if US bombings cease"). Peking scored the "gang of monsters" which included Britain, India, Pope Paul, U Thant and the Soviets for assisting the US in its "peace talks swindle."

The communique issued by President Johnson and the South Vietnamese leaders at GUAM expressed regret that North Vietnam had rebuffed "the numerous and varied efforts in recent months to bring about a peaceful settlement." The pledge to pursue peace was renewed. (New York Times, March 22)

The LBJ-Ho Chi Minh correspondence was made public on 21 March. Nhan Dan characterized President Johnson's letter as "evidence of this double-dealing US policy" and as a "new deceitful effort" by the US. The paper reiterated Trinh's statement of 28 January, said it "clearly expressed the good will of our government and people for such a peaceful settlement" and castigated the US for "brazenly" asserting there has been no sign from North Vietnam of a readiness to settle the problem peacefully." Nhan Dan said the US call for a reciprocal DRV action "has been categorically rejected by the Vietnamese people." (March 22) According to a 22 March AFP report from Hanoi, observers there felt the publication of these letters reflected a definite hardening of Hanoi's position. The NLF praised Ho Chi Minh for exposing "the hypocritical arguments of the US imperialists." Calling Johnson's letter "insolent words," the Front highlighted Ho's statement that "the Vietnamese people are determined not to submit to force..." (Liberation Radio, March 25)

Peking's Jenmin Jih Pao (27 March) asserted that by "honorable peace" the US means "the Vietnamese people must go down on their knees and surrender to (US) military pressure..." The Soviets were accused of acting as "the errand boy for the US 'peace talks' conspiracy" and of working "in close collaboration with U Thant." (NCNA, 27 March)

A Soviet commentator claimed Johnson's conditions for peace amounted to asking for a Vietnamese surrender, said Trinh and Ho had demonstrated

their readiness to talk "but as long as American bombs explode on its territories, the DRV will not negotiate." (Moscow Radio, March 23) And the Bulgarian Party daily, referring to the Ho-LBJ exchange on March 24, said the letters "show again who really seeks honorable talks and who strives for violence, hiding behind hypocritical fairy tales for peace talks." The article said the U.S. rejected the DRV offer for negotiations because it does not seek a peaceful solution but strives "toward capitulation of its opponents."

A Hungarian correspondent, reporting an interview with Foreign Minister TRINH on March 23, quoted him as saying, "each manifestation of DRV Government's good will meets with a further grave war escalation by the United States." Trinh said "every word uttered by the U.S. about peace is mere hypocrisy" designed to "conceal U.S. war measures from the public." (Hungarian News Agency, March 23)

At a press conference on March 29, UN Secretary General U THANT revealed proposals for settling the Vietnam war which he had presented to the "parties directly involved in the Vietnam conflict" on March 14. His first step, a "general standstill truce," was termed "a practical necessity if useful negotiations are to be undertaken." Because of the difficulty of providing effective practical supervision, Thant stated it would be up to the combatants to exert earnest efforts to enforce the truce. Once the truce comes into effect, the parties directly involved in the conflict would take the next step of entering into preliminary talks. Thant said these talks could take the following forms: (1) Direct talks between the U.S. and the DRV; (2) Direct talks between the U.S. and the DRV with the participation of the Geneva Co-Chairmen; (3) Direct talks between the U.S. and the DRV with the participation of the members of the ICC; (4) Direct talks between the U.S. and the DRV with the participation of the Geneva Co-Chairmen and the members of the ICC. Thant said "these preliminary talks should seek to reach an agreement on the timing, place, agenda and participants in the subsequent formal meeting -- the reconvening of the Geneva conference." Thant stressed the importance of including both the Saigon Government and the Front as participants in the formal conference. On April 1, U Thant called upon the U.S. "unilaterally to put the stand-still truce into effect and therefore fire if only fired upon." He claimed that only in this way can the impasse be broken. (New York Times, March 29, April 1)

The U.S. (on March 18) accepted the three-point peace plan, called for prompt talks to lead the way to a general stand-still truce, and pledged U.S. preparedness to enter negotiations at any time. The U.S.

added, the Government of South Vietnam will have to be "appropriately involved throughout the process." (New York Times, 29 March) The U.S. avoided a direct reply to Thant's "unilateral stand down" comment. South Vietnam accepted "in principle the main points of the secretary's proposals," but offered two suggestions. It called for a meeting between the representative of the DRV armed forces and its own to discuss the details of the truce and suggested that instead of the preliminary meeting, a "Geneva-type international conference be held as soon as possible after the truce is effectively enforced." (Saigon Vietnam Press, 29 March)

A DRV Foreign Ministry spokesman on March 27 commented on "western reports" of a new U Thant-proposed Vietnam solution. The spokesman said "to call on both sides to cease-fire and hold unconditional negotiations, while the United States is committing aggression against Vietnam and taking serious steps in its military escalation in both zones of Vietnam is to make no distinction between the aggressor and the victim of aggression, to depart from reality and to demand that the Vietnamese people accept the conditions of the aggressors." He added, "the Vietnam problem has no concern with the United Nations and the United Nations has absolutely no right to interfere in any way in the Vietnam question."

In rejecting U Thant's proposals, Nhan Dan pointed up the difference between Thant's previous plan and that announced 29 March. The first plan had called for the U.S. to stop bombing as the first step; now the first point entailed a general truce. Nhan Dan said the truce idea amounted to a demand that the "Vietnamese people lay down their arms and give up the fight." Further, the new proposal "has not referred in any way to a point of paramount importance in the settlement of the Vietnam problem": the position of the NFLSV in negotiations. The paper said any "attempt to solve the South Vietnam problem without recognizing the NFLSV is to ignore reality."

Liberation Radio (7 April) blasted U Thant's idea, said it "tallies perfectly with the U.S. bandits' arguments" and "will lead nowhere" because it ignores the NLF and is a "screen to cover up the dirty faces of the U.S. aggressors."

China denounced U Thant's proposal and said the initiative represents "another big joint US-USSR fraud and conspiracy to force capitulation through war." Jenmin Jih Pao said this proposal is worse than

Thant's earlier one which called for a halt in US bombing because it imposes "more severe conditions" on the Vietnamese. The general truce was called a "refurbished version of Johnson's 'principle of reciprocity.'" U Thant was called a "faithful flunkey of US imperialists," the UN "a tool in the hands of the US imperialists." (NCNA, 31 March)

April 1967

A CEYLONESE INITIATIVE was announced 10 April, during U Thant's visit to the island. The first of two stages called for a meeting of GVN, DRV and NLF leaders to discuss pre-conditions for a cease-fire. Ceylon was offered as a possible site. The pre-conditions would cover cessation of bombing, formation of interim procedures to ensure the status quo, cessation of all belligerent activity, withdrawal of foreign troops and personnel, suspension of military aid. The second stage would include guarantees from bordering states and the UN Security Council on the integrity of Vietnam. Ceylon's Prime Minister said in discussing the proposal with interested parties, North Vietnam had indicated the most essential preliminary steps were cessation of all aggression against the DRV, acceptance of the Geneva Accords and commencement of discussions between Saigon and the Front. U Thant called this a sound proposal; Premier Ky supported it. The US welcomed Ceylon's efforts but reiterated the need for reciprocity from North Vietnam to achieve a bombing halt.

CANADA's four stage scenario for peace was announced by Paul Martin on 11 April. The first stage "might be accomplished by restoring the demilitarized character" of the demilitarized zone. Secondly, both sides would agree "not to engage in any military activities which differed in either scale or pattern" from activities they now pursue; this might entail an agreement prohibiting reinforcement of men or arms on either side. Third, all hostilities would stop. Finally, "the process of return to the cease-fire of the Geneva settlements" would be completed (including liberation and reparation of prisoners, withdrawal of foreign forces and dismantling of military bases). Martin said Canada was sending a representative to Hanoi to explain the peace proposal. (New York Times, 12 and 20 April, 1967)

Saigon supported the Canadian plan and repeated the GVN willingness to meet with or contact "Hanoi authorities" at any time. (18 April)

The US responded to the Canadian proposal with an additional suggestion. On 19 April the US said if the DRV withdrew its troops 10 miles north of the DMZ, the US and GVN would execute a simultaneous 10-mile pull-back south of the Zone. If Hanoi agreed to the mutual withdrawal, all military actions in and over the DMZ and areas extending 10 miles north and south of it could stop. And if Hanoi would grant

similar privileges, the US and GVN would be ready to cooperate fully with the ICC to grant it complete access to monitor and supervise the withdrawal of forces and continued inspection of the southern part of the DMZ plus 10 miles. Upon separation of forces, the US and GVN would be ready to undertake talks leading to further de-escalation and to an over-all settlement. (New York Times, 20 April)

Hanoi rejected both the Canadian proposal and the US 10-mile Zone extension suggestion. Nhan Dan denounced Martin's speech -- without mentioning his name -- for failing to "urge the US imperialists to stop their aggressive war in Vietnam, cease definitively and unconditionally" the bombing and withdraw US troops. (VNA, 16 April). The DRV Foreign Ministry "energetically condemns and rejects the deceitful proposal for widening of the demilitarized zone by 10 miles on either side." To bring peace, the statement demanded US cessation of bombing, withdrawal of troops, and other well-known conditions. (VNA, 21 April)

Mai Van Bo, in a Canadian radio-TV interview, rejected Johnson's insistence on a reciprocal gesture from the DRV. He said South Vietnam belongs to all the Vietnamese people and implied that the DRV would not cease supporting fellow countrymen. Bo also said the Ho-LBJ correspondence had been made public to expose before world public opinion the real intentions and objectives of American policy in Vietnam; he noted that the bombing of North Vietnam had been resumed before the US had received Ho Chi Minh's reply to the President's letter. (Canadian Broadcasting System, 21 April)

The NLF denounced the US-Zone extension plan, accused the US of having long plotted to turn the "temporary demarcation line into a territorial border, perpetuate the partition of Vietnam...and prepare for war against the DRV." (Radio Hanoi, 23 April)

Peking called the DMZ-extension plan a "dirty trick." (NCNA, 23 April)

Tokyo's Asahi Evening News released a long interview with Premier Pham Van Dong on 25 April. Dong reportedly said: "Our four point stand is the correct basis of a settlement of the Vietnam war -- no correct solution can be found if one departs from it. It proceeds from the Geneva Agreements." Referring to Trinh's 28 January interview, Dong said he "pointed out that if the US wants to talk with the DRV it must unconditionally stop bombing raids and all other acts of war against the DRV." Pham Van Dong said, "this is a very important diplomatic move of ours. It shows that we are ready to talk, as the US claims that it is ready to talk, at any time..." Dong said Ho Chi Minh's

letter to Johnson had reiterated Hanoi's major demands. He claimed that Americans and those more or less close to them "equate aggressor and victim of aggression. This is the clearest point because it is translated into requirements -- that is, the requirements about 'mutual de-escalation.' This is unacceptable to us...The US has started the war so it must bring it to an end. Having started the war, the US must de-escalate it...In our view, finding a peaceful settlement in Vietnam rests with the US Government. As long as (the US) wants war there can be no question of peaceful settlement."

May 1967

In a 1 May speech, Secretary of State RUSK listed 28 proposals toward peace "made by ourselves or by others." He said "...we have said yes to these same proposals and Hanoi has said no. Surely all those yesses and all those noes threw a light upon motivation -- upon the question of who is interested in peace and who is trying to absorb a neighbor by force." (New York Times, 2 May)^{18/}

U THANT reportedly disputed the impression offered by Rusk in the May Day speech. He felt imminent negotiations had been frustrated in February 1965 and in December 1966 by US bombings. (Washington Post, 3 May) The Soviets argued with Rusk's theme. A TASS broadcast noted that Rusk "did not say, however, that all the American proposals had been in the nature of ultimatums and could not be accepted by a sovereign state." (TASS, 1 May)

18/ Rusk's 28 proposals:

1. A reconvening of the Geneva Conference of 1954 -- and a return to the agreements of 1954;
2. A reconvening of the Geneva Conference of 1962 on Laos -- and a return to the agreements of 1962;
3. A conference on Cambodia;
4. An all-Asian peace conference;
5. A special effort by the two Co-Chairmen;
6. A special effort by the ICC;

18/ Rusk's 28 proposals: (Continued)

7. A role for the United Nations Security Council -- or the General Assembly -- or the Secretary General;
8. Talks through intermediaries -- single or group;
9. Direct talks -- with the United States or with South Vietnam;
10. Exchange of prisoners of war;
11. Supervision of treatment of prisoners by International Red Cross;
12. Demilitarize the DMZ;
13. Widen and demilitarize the DMZ;
14. Interposition of international forces between combatants;
15. Mutual withdrawal of foreign forces, including NVN forces;
16. Assistance to Cambodia to assure its neutrality and territory;
17. Cessation of bombing and reciprocal de-escalation;
18. Cessation of bombing, infiltration and augmentation of United States forces;
19. Three suspensions of bombings to permit serious talks;
20. Discussion of Hanoi's 4 points along with points of others, such as Saigon's 4 points and our 14 points;
21. Discussion of an agreed 4 points as basis for negotiation;
22. Willingness to find means to have the views of the Liberation Front heard in peace discussions;
23. Negotiations without conditions, negotiations about conditions or discussion of a final settlement;
24. Peace and the inclusion of North Vietnam in large development program for Southeast Asia;
25. Government of South Vietnam to be determined by free elections;
26. Question of reunification to be determined by free elections;

A CZECH journalist who interviewed Wilfred Burchett quoted Burchett on NLF goals. Burchett said they are: the establishment of a coalition government in the south and the deferring of Vietnamese unity for 10 or 15 years in favor of an independent and neutral South Vietnam. (Prague News Service, 6 May)

Another journalist, Simon Malley, UN correspondent for Jeune Afrique, reportedly had a series of interviews with Chou En-Lai and other Chinese officials in March. Malley said Chou promised China would send its vast armies into Vietnam the moment Hanoi is threatened with a "sellout peace." Chou forecast continued US escalation until eventually troops were landed in North Vietnam. This, said Chou, would be another contingency demanding Chicom military intervention. An avalanche of Chinese "volunteers" would also be sent if Hanoi requested them. According to Malley, Chou said China had advised Hanoi against going ahead with peace moves in January. (The Evening Star, 14 and 15 May 1967) Peking denied the Malley stories on 16 May.

The Czech official journal Rude Pravo discussed Malley's interviews, emphasizing the Chinese views on settlement. The paper said it is known that Peking does not agree with DRV conditions for opening talks and that Chou's interview was possibly addressed to Hanoi with the threat that if the DRV showed a willingness to discuss what Peking regards as a compromise, Peking would be ready to send an army into North Vietnam -- thus making peaceful settlement impossible.

SINGAPORE and INDIA called for a halt to the bombing as the necessary first step to the cessation of all hostilities. (Paris AFP, 9 May)

On 10 and 11 May, U THANT repeated his appeals for a bombing halt. He said five South Asian governments he visited on his recent tour agreed with his analysis that a bombing halt would result in talks, that without a cessation of bombing no talks were possible. He said "the people of Vietnam should be permitted to resolve their problems without foreign interference." (New York Times, 11 May) Thant quoted Secretary McNamara's admission that bombing did not have the desired effects of reducing infiltration and pleaded with the United States to take "certain limited risks." (Washington Post, 11 May) In another speech, U Thant reiterated his

18/ Rusk's 28 proposals: (Continued)

27. Reconciliation with Viet Cong and readmission to the body politic of South Vietnam.
28. South Vietnam can be neutral if it so chooses.

position that since January 28, Hanoi had repeated that bombing was the first obstacle to talks. Thant said Hanoi's averred willingness to talk after a bombing halt recognized the positions of its allies.

AMBASSADOR GOLDBERG replied that the US was ready to stop bombing if assured such a move would be answered by "appropriate de-escalation on the other side." (New York Times, 12 May) Mr. Goldberg spoke the following day in Chicago. He asked five questions to which the US required answers before ceasing air raids: what would the US and Hanoi talk about; would proposals of both sides be discussed; would talks be negotiations, not merely a demand for US surrender; how would Hanoi militarily reciprocate the cessation of bombing; what assurances would exist that neither side gained by the other's de-escalation. Goldberg also observed that American and North Vietnamese goals were most divergent on the third of Hanoi's four points: the US could not agree that the NLF be recognized but Saigon ignored in peace talks, he said. (US/UN Press Release 54, 12 May)

The DRV and the NLF scored US military movement into the DMZ on 21 and 22 May. The Front called the introduction of troops into the southern part of the Zone "an extremely serious step of war escalation...an attempt to set up a no-man's land along the provisional military demarcation line and prepare for a new aggressive ground attack against the DRV." The Front said this "utterly sabotaged the stature of the demilitarized zone and the Geneva agreements on Vietnam." The DRV statement added the implication that this action was more evidence of the "deceitful and impudent" nature of the "so-called peace efforts of the US Administration." (VNA, 21 and 23 May) Peking's equally vitriolic statement ended with a declaration of China's willingness "...to take all necessary action" to assist the Vietnamese repel US aggression. (NCNA, 23 May)

On 23 May, a 24-hour cease-fire in honor of Buddha's Birthday was observed. The GVN initially proposed the truce on 8 April and offered to meet with representatives of North Vietnam to discuss its extension. The National Liberation Front then called for a 48-hour truce, claiming this to be the original offer. Representatives of opposing sides did not meet; the truce was not extended.

July 1967

DRV Foreign Minister TRINH reaffirmed his January formula in an interview with a Vienna Volkstimme reporter (2 July). Trinh said

negotiations can begin if the US "unconditionally discontinues all bombing raids and all other acts of war against the DRV." He added, "it is obvious that the US does not want peace" because every move in that direction was followed by more troops and an intensification of attacks against the north. He said North Vietnam will "never conduct talks with the aggressors under the pressure of force," labeled mutual de-escalation an "arrogant American condition" and claimed if the US is "really looking for a settlement...there will be no difficulties."

The New York Times of 10 July reported that at the Stockholm International Conference on Vietnam (6-9 July), British Lord BROCKWAY was told by DRV and NLF representatives that they would be willing to enter into peace negotiations if these conditions were met: an unconditional cessation of the bombing; recognition of Front representatives at any peace negotiations; embodiment of 1954 Geneva Agreement terms in the settlement.

Eight Republican Congressmen suggested mutual de-escalation could be achieved if the US initiated a 60-day suspension of bombing raids against North Vietnamese territory above the 21st parallel. If Hanoi took a commensurate de-escalatory step within the two-month period the US would then suspend bombing north of the 20th parallel for 60 days. This would continue down to the DMZ at the 17th parallel. The Republicans felt this plan could produce a spirit of confidence between Hanoi and the US which could lead to negotiations for a similar staged de-escalation in South Vietnam. (New York Times, 11 July)

Hanoi denied the report of lowered DRV/NLF demands; the four point stand was reaffirmed as the basic North Vietnamese position. (VNA, 21 July)

PRIME MINISTER SATO reportedly said Japan's position was that bombing of North Vietnam should stop immediately and all parties concerned in the conflict should sit at a conference table to negotiate peace. Sato added he would not hesitate to go to Hanoi if he were convinced the trip would serve "positively" to bring peace. He said the present situation did not warrant the journey, however. (Tokyo Kyodo, 31 July)

U THANT, speaking to a Quaker group on 30 July, said "an honorable peace could be brought about in Vietnam" and indicated the first step is to end the bombing and bring the problem to the conference table. Thant said "it is nationalism, and not communism, that animates the resistance movement in Vietnam against all foreigners and now particularly against the Americans." He declared the war cannot be ended until the US recognizes it as "a war of national independence" rather than one of communist aggression. (Washington Post, 31 July)

August 1967

At a press conference, 18 August, PRESIDENT JOHNSON said the US is "very anxious to meet with representatives of the North Vietnamese Government, at any time, at a mutually agreed place, to try to agree on some plan that will resolve...differences...As of the moment, there has not been communicated to us any change of position any different from that reflected in Ho Chi Minh's letter..." of 15 February. Johnson said the US would welcome "any indication on the part of the North Vietnamese that they would agree to a cease-fire, that they would agree to negotiations, that they would agree that if we had a bombing pause, that they would not take advantage of that pause to increase our men killed in action." (New York Times, 19 August)

Peking called President Johnson's talk of a bombing pause "trash," part of the "war escalation and peace talks fraud." Jenmin Jih Pao revived the Chinese charge of US-USSR collusion in trying to "force surrender through a pause in the bombing." The paper noted Rusk's admission "that Kosygin told Johnson negotiations on ending the war in Vietnam could begin if the US stopped bombing North Vietnam" and pointed out that Pravda (6 August) had "openly raved that the pause in the bombing of North Vietnam by the US would pave the way for peace talks on Vietnam." Jenmin Jih Pao concluded, the new LBJ offer is part of a "new fraud" cooked up by US imperialists and Soviet revisionists. (NCNA, 19 and 22 August)

September 1967

AMBASSADOR GOLDBERG, speaking at the UN General Assembly on 21 September, discussed the US commitment to a political solution in Vietnam through "discussions or negotiations" but regretted that Hanoi had "not yet agreed to this objective." Citing the familiar charge that "bombing is the sole obstacle to negotiations," Mr. Goldberg said "no...third party-including those governments which are among Hanoi's closest friends-has conveyed to us any authoritative messages from Hanoi that there would in fact be negotiations if the bombing were stopped." He asked for "enlightenment" on the subject. Mr. Goldberg said the "principles of an honorable settlement" envisaged by the US government were those embodied in the Geneva Agreements of 1954 and 1962; he asked if Hanoi agreed with his interpretation of the Geneva Accords, "to which it professedly subscribes."

Hanoi replied through a Nhan Dan editorial on 27 September. Goldberg's questions were called "insolent and ridiculous," the issue of whether Hanoi "would or should" enter into negotiations if bombing were halted was not clarified. North Vietnam repeated demands for U.S. withdrawal and recognition of the NLF as sole genuine representative of the Vietnamese people.

CANADIAN FOREIGN MINISTER PAUL MARTIN made a public appeal for a cessation of bombing in his 27 September speech to the General Assembly because, according to Prime Minister Pearson, Canada thinks "this is an essential first step to negotiations" to end the war in Vietnam. Pearson added that the speech did not represent "any big change" in policy, cited his call for a bombing halt of two years ago, his government's continuous effort to bring about the cessation of bombing and commencement of negotiations and said, "there comes a time when we must say in public what we've been saying in private." The bombing halt, lined to a reinstatement of the "intended status" of the demilitarized zone (subject to international supervision), was the first of Canada's four steps-toward-peace proposal. Subsequent steps would include: freezing military operations and capabilities at existing levels; a cease-fire; finally, withdrawal of outside forces whose presence in the area is not permitted under the 1954 Geneva Accords and dismantling of all military bases.

The 27 Initiatives

(Compiled by Department of State)

2. CHRONOLOGICAL DETAILS OF PUBLICLY-
DISCLOSED U.S. AND THIRD-PARTY VIET-
NAM PEACE EFFORTS

I. LAOS CONFERENCE—*July 23, 1962.* The Governments of Burma, Cambodia, Canada, Communist China, North Vietnam, France, India, Poland, the Republic of Vietnam, Thailand, the U.S.S.R., the United Kingdom, and the United States declared they would respect the sovereignty, independence, neutrality, unity, and territorial integrity of Laos. The agreement provided for the withdrawal of all foreign troops and prohibited the introduction of such troops into Laos. The United States carried out its obligations and withdrew all military personnel. North Vietnam, however, violated the terms of the agreement from the outset.

Through its domination of the Pathet Lao, North Vietnam has systematically undermined the Geneva settlement in Laos, violated the military provisions of the Agreements, prevented national reconciliation among the Lao factions, and obstructed the International Control Commission (ICC) in the performance of its supervisory duties. Not only were North Vietnamese troops not withdrawn from Laos under the provisions of the 1962 Agreements, but North Vietnam has continued to support actively the Pathet Lao forces through the introduction into Laos of regular North Vietnamese troops and military supplies. In addition, North Vietnam has violated Laos' neutrality by using territory in the southern Lao panhandle for the purpose of infiltrating men and supplies into South Vietnam in support of the Viet Cong.

2. UN SECURITY COUNCIL INVITATION TO HANOI—*August 7, 1964.* The President of the Security Council announced the understanding reached among the Council members that the Security Council would welcome any information relating to the Tonkin Gulf incident that North Vietnam might desire to provide, whether by participating in discussions or in some other form. North Vietnam replied on August 19 that the question did not lie within the competence of the Security Council and that any decision reached on the issue would be considered null and void by North Vietnamese authorities.

3. SEVENTEEN NON-ALIGNED NATIONS' APPEAL—*April 1, 1965.* These states delivered an appeal for a peaceful solution in Vietnam through negotiations without preconditions.

The United States welcomed the appeal on April 8 and indicated agreement with its principles.

North Vietnam rejected the proposal on April 19, characterizing as "inappropriate" any approach other than that based on its own preconditions, including the prior withdrawal of U.S. forces and acceptance of the "National Liberation Front" (N.L.F.) program for South Vietnam.

4. PRESIDENT JOHNSON'S SPEECH AT JOHNS HOPKINS UNIVERSITY—*April 7, 1965.* The President stated that the United States was prepared to enter into "unconditional discussions" with the other governments concerned in the Vietnam problem.

On April 19, Hanoi labeled Mr. Johnson's speech a "smokescreen to cover up the U.S. imperialists' military adventures in Vietnam."

5. INDIAN GOVERNMENT'S PROPOSAL—*April, 1965.* India proposed: a) cessation of hostilities by both sides, b) policing of borders by an Afro-Asian patrol force, and c) maintenance of present boundaries in Vietnam so long as desired by the Vietnamese people. The United States gave this constructive proposal careful consideration and discussed it with the Government of India.

Hanoi Radio announced on May 6 that North Vietnam had told India its proposal was "at complete variance with the spirit and basic principles" of the Geneva Agreements and ran counter to India's status as International Control Commission Chairman.

6. UN SECRETARY GENERAL'S PEACE EFFORTS—*April, 1965.* U Thant indicated his readiness to visit certain capitals, including Hanoi and Peking, to discuss the prospects for a peaceful settlement in Vietnam. The United States welcomed and supported this as it has other peacemaking efforts by the Secretary General.

North Vietnam's Pham Van Dong said on April 8 that any approach tending to secure UN intervention in Vietnam was "inappropriate." On April 12 Peking's *People's Daily* said that if U Thant were undertaking the trip in his capacity as Secretary General, "we should like to tell him in all seriousness to spare himself this trouble" since "the Vietnam question has nothing to do with the United Nations."

7. SUSPENSION OF BOMBING—*May 12-17, 1965.* The United States suspended its bombing operations against North Vietnam for five days and 20 hours. This suspension was made known to the other side to see if there might be a response in kind. Representatives of Hanoi simply returned the U.S. message in a plain envelope.

On May 18 Hanoi Radio broadcast a North Vietnam Foreign Ministry statement which called the bombing pause a "trick" meant "to cover up [the United States'] extremely dangerous acts intensifying the war in Vietnam . . . and to deceive world public opinion."

8. COMMONWEALTH PRIME MINISTERS' INITIATIVE—*June, 1965.* The Prime Ministers of the Commonwealth nations initiated a plan for a special mission to visit the capitals of the countries involved to "explore the circumstances in which a conference might be held to end the fighting in Vietnam." The United States immediately welcomed the Commonwealth initiative.

Hanoi Radio said on July 1 that North Vietnam would not receive the mission headed by Prime Minister Wilson because it doubted the mission's good will toward peace and considered it "only a repetition of Lyndon Johnson's peace negotiations swindle under the cloak of the British Commonwealth mission on the Vietnam problem."

9. DAVIES MISSION—*July, 1965*. Harold Davies, a representative of the British Government, visited Hanoi to explore North Vietnam's willingness to receive the Commonwealth mission referred to above.

Prime Minister Wilson reported on July 15 that Mr. Davies had been unable to obtain North Vietnam's agreement to receive the proposed mission.

10. PRESIDENT'S LETTER TO U THANT—*July 28, 1965*. President Johnson, in a letter to Secretary General U Thant, reiterated his hope that "members of the UN, individually and collectively, will use their influence to bring to the negotiating table all governments involved in an attempt to halt all aggression and evolve a peaceful solution."

11. AMBASSADOR GOLDBERG'S LETTER TO PRESIDENT OF UN SECURITY COUNCIL—*July 30, 1965*. In a letter to the Security Council President, Ambassador Goldberg noted that the responsibility to persist in the search for peace weighed especially upon the members of the Security Council. He stated that the United States stood ready, as in the past, to collaborate unconditionally with members of the Security Council in the search for an acceptable formula to restore peace and security in Southeast Asia.

12. INDIAN/YUGOSLAV PROPOSAL—*August, 1965*. A joint Indian-Yugoslav communique following talks in Belgrade between President Tito and Prime Minister Shastri declared on August 1 that there was no alternative to a political solution within the framework of the Geneva Agreements and declared that it was of the utmost importance that parties concerned in the Vietnam situation meet at a conference table. The communique said the "National Liberation Front" should participate in such a conference. A cessation of the bombing of North Vietnam, the declaration concluded, would create favorable conditions in which there could be appropriate responses on all sides leading to a conference.

13. UNITED KINGDOM 12-NATION APPEAL—*December, 1965*. The United Kingdom proposed on December 9 a 12-nation appeal to North Vietnam to stop fighting and negotiate a peace, and separately called upon the Soviet Union to join in signing and circu-

lating the message among the countries which attended the 1954 Geneva Conference as well as those represented in the Vietnam International Control Commission.

President Johnson declared that the United States was "ready to talk unconditionally, anywhere, with peace as our agenda."

On December 17 Hanoi Radio said: "The D.R.V. (North Vietnam) Government categorically rejects all British plans and proposals made under the pretense of peace. Once again, the D.R.V. Ministry of Foreign Affairs solemnly reaffirms that the four-point stand of the D.R.V. Government is the only basis for a correct settlement of the Vietnamese problem; any solution contrary to this stand is null and void and unable to bring about genuine peace in Vietnam."

14. CAMBODIAN PROPOSAL FOR I.C.C. EXPANSION—*December, 1965*. Prince Sihanouk proposed the expansion of I.C.C. activities in Cambodia to include the monitoring of the port of Sihanoukville and the closer monitoring of the Cambodia-Vietnam frontier. His purpose was to reply to charges that Sihanoukville was a funnel for military supplies for the Viet Cong and also to reply to other charges that Cambodia permitted Viet Cong forces to use Cambodian territory as a place of sanctuary. The proposal has not been implemented, primarily because of obstacles placed in its path by the U.S.S.R., which has yet to respond officially to the Cambodian request. The United States has supported the proposal from the outset and has stated that it is willing to consider providing financial assistance to a more effective I.C.C. operation in Cambodia.

15. POPE PAUL VI'S APPEAL—*December 19, 1965*. Pope Paul VI publicly appealed for a truce in Vietnam during the holiday season and for efforts by all parties to move toward negotiations; he addressed a similar appeal to Hanoi through private channels. The White House on December 20 stated: "The President welcomes this new expression by the Pope of the need for peace in the world and specifically in Southeast Asia."

North Vietnam's President, Ho Chi Minh, in a reply sent to the Pope on December 28, said: "The U.S. leaders want war and not peace. The talks about unconditional negotiations made by the

U.S. President are merely a maneuver to cover up his plan for war intensification and aggression in Vietnam." Ho Chi Minh reiterated North Vietnam's stand as to how peace could be restored in Vietnam.

16. CONCENTRATED PEACE EFFORT—*December, 1965-January, 1966.* The United States suspended bombings on December 24 and sent six Presidential envoys to 34 capitals, communicating the U.S. position to 115 governments. The U.S. position also was communicated to Hanoi. The bombing suspension was continued for 36 days and 15 hours.

Ho Chi Minh's January 24 letter, released January 28, reiterated Hanoi's Four-Point demands and added a fifth condition: The United States must recognize the "National Liberation Front" as the "sole genuine representative" of the South Vietnamese people "and engage in negotiations with it."

17. RONNING MISSION—*June 1966.* Canadian emissary Chester Ronning returning from a visit to Hanoi to report a totally negative response from North Vietnamese officials on making any corresponding move in response to a cessation of bombing. This refusal of reciprocal action was accompanied by a reiteration of familiar demands by Hanoi for recognition of the N.L.F., withdrawal of American troops and acceptance of the Four Points.

18. ASIAN CONFERENCE INITIATIVE—*August 6, 1966.* The Foreign Ministers of Thailand, Malaysia, and the Philippines proposed that 17 Asian nations invite the leaders of all countries involved in the Vietnam conflict to a Vietnam peace conference in Asia.

Secretary of State Rusk termed the proposal a constructive one and said the United States would follow with great interest what resulted from it.

On August 8, Hanoi denounced the appeal as a "cheap farce staged by third-class henchmen of U.S. imperialism."

19. UN SECRETARY GENERAL'S PROPOSAL—*August 31, 1966.* The Secretary General again suggested three steps to end the war (a proposal first made in April, 1966).

A Hanoi commentary on October 6 asserted that while the first point (cessation of bombing of North Vietnam) "conforms

to the requirement for a settlement of the Vietnam issue," the second point (mutual reduction of hostilities) was "obviously negative and clashes with the first." In addition the editorial indicated that U Thant's third point (willingness to negotiate with all participants in the fighting) was unacceptable as falling short of Hanoi's "sole genuine representative" claim for the "liberation" front.

20. AMBASSADOR GOLDBERG'S GENERAL ASSEMBLY ADDRESS—*September 22, 1966.* Ambassador Goldberg set forth proposals for peace in Southeast Asia (a bombing halt in return for corresponding de-escalation; mutual withdrawal; a possible National Liberation Front role in negotiations).

Hanoi on September 24 scored Ambassador Goldberg's speech for the conditional nature of the bombing cessation offer, for the failure to recognize the N.L.F. as "the sole legal representative of the South Vietnamese people," and for attempting to use the UN as an "instrument for their aggressive policy in Vietnam."

21. BRITISH SIX-POINT PLAN—*October 6, 1966.* British Foreign Secretary Brown announced a detailed six-point plan aimed at ending the Vietnam war and asked the Soviet Union to join in reconvening the Geneva Conference.

Hanoi and the N.L.F. on October 8 and 9 respectively "sternly rebuffed" the Brown proposal as a "rehash" of the recent U.S. peace initiatives. The N.L.F. charged that the proposal demonstrated Britain's delinquency as a Geneva Co-chairman.

22. MANILA COMMUNIQUE—*October 25, 1966.* The communique pledged that allied forces "shall be withdrawn, after close consultation with the Government of South Vietnam, as the other withdraws its forces to the North, ceases infiltration, and the level of violence thus subsides." The forces would be withdrawn as soon as possible and not later than six months after the above conditions had been fulfilled.

Hanoi denounced the Manila Communique, and the N.L.F. on October 28 described the Manila proposal for a peaceful settlement as equivalent to "a demand for our people to lay down their arms and serve as slaves of U.S. neo-colonialism."

23. AMBASSADOR GOLDBERG'S LETTER TO U THANT—*December 19, 1966.* Ambassador Goldberg sent a letter to the Secretary General which referred to Pope Paul's December 8 appeal that the temporary Christmas truce be transformed into a cessation of hostilities which would become the occasion for sincere negotiations. The Ambassador requested that the Secretary General take whatever steps he considered necessary "to bring about the necessary discussions" which could lead to such a ceasefire.

On January 12 Hanoi condemned this initiative.

24. BRITISH PROPOSAL FOR CESSATION OF HOSTILITIES—*December 30, 1966.* Foreign Secretary Brown addressed messages to the United States, North Vietnam and the Republic of Vietnam proposing an immediate three-way meeting to arrange a cessation of hostilities.

President Johnson commented on January 1: "We appreciate the interest of all peace-loving nations in arranging a ceasefire, in attempting to bring the disputing parties together, and in an effort to work out a conference where various views can be exchanged . . ."

On January 3, Hanoi denounced the British proposal as a rehash of the "deceitful shopworn clamor of the U.S. imperialists," condemned Foreign Secretary Brown's failure to include the N.L.F. as a participant at the proposed meeting and claimed that the British initiative ran counter to Britain's responsibilities as a Geneva Co-chairman.

25. TET (Lunar New Year) TRUCE—*February 8-13, 1967.* The United States suspended bombing for five days and 18 hours after many prior weeks in which the American Government had communicated to Hanoi several possible routes to peace, any one of which the United States was prepared to take. (Four messages were sent to Hanoi in January. Not until January 27 did Hanoi respond, and then only with a diatribe against the United States.) On February 8, President Johnson, in a renewed effort to get talks started, proposed in a letter to Ho Chi Minh that the United States would stop bombing the North and halt any further troop buildup if Hanoi would end its infiltration into South Vietnam. On February 13, Ho's letter to the Pope foreshadowed the rejection of these

proposals, and Ho's February 15 reply to the President, released by Hanoi March 21, rejected the Presidential overture, asserting once again that only if the United States ordered the "unconditional" cessation of the bombing and "all other acts of war" against North Vietnam "could" talks begin. Nevertheless, the President's proposal still stands, as Hanoi has several times been informed.

26. PRESIDENT'S LETTER TO POPE PAUL—*February 8, 1967*. Replying to a message from the Pope expressing the hope that the Tet truce might open the way to negotiations for a "just and stable peace," President Johnson said: "We are prepared to talk at any time and place, in any forum, with the object of bringing peace to Vietnam. However, I know you would not expect us to reduce military action unless the other side is willing to do likewise. We are prepared to discuss the balanced reduction in military activity, the cessation of hostilities, or any practical arrangements which could lead to these results."

27. Continuous Bilateral Contacts with Communist States, including talks with Chinese Ambassador in Warsaw—*1964 to present*.

28. BOMBING PAUSES:

- 1) May 12-17, 1965 (five days, 20 hours)
- 2) December 24, 1965-January 30, 1966 (36 days, 15 hours)
- 3) December 23-25, 1966 (two days)
- 4) December 30, 1966-January 1, 1967 (two days)
- 5) February 8-13, 1967 (five days, 18 hours)

3. SUMMARY OF NEGOTIATION POINTS

I. The US Fourteen Points (January 1965)

1. Geneva Agreements of 1954 and 1962 are adequate basis for peace.
2. We welcome conference on SEAsia or on any part thereof.
3. We welcome "negotiations without pre-conditions."
4. We welcome unconditional discussions.
5. Cessation of hostilities could be first order of business or could be subject of preliminary discussions.
6. Hanoi's four points could be discussed along with other's points.
7. We want no U.S. bases in SEAsia.
8. No U.S. troops in South Vietnam after peace is assured.
9. We support free elections in SVN to give the people a choice.
10. Question of reunification of Vietnam should be determined by the Vietnamese through their own free decision.
11. Countries of SEAsia can be nonaligned or neutral as they choose.
12. US prefers to use resources for the economic reconstruction in SEAsia. If there is peace, North Vietnam can share benefits of at least \$1B we will contribute.
13. The President: "The Viet Cong would not have difficulty being represented and having their views represented if for a moment Hanoi decided she wanted to cease aggression. I don't think that would be an unsurmountable problem."
14. We could stop the bombing of NVN as a step toward peace although there has been no hint or suggestion from the other side as to what they would do if the bombing stopped.

II. The NLF Five Points (23 March 1965)

1. US sabotaged the 1944 Geneva Accords and is solely responsible for the current war.
2. Negotiations under current conditions would be useless; total US withdrawal is the condition implied.
3. Vietnam is a single country; however, the statement avoids specific future political relationships between the NLF and the DRV.
4. NLF relies primarily on its own force and ability, but assistance from all sources will be accepted.
5. NLF and the people of SVN must continue to fight against the US aggressors.

III. North Vietnam's Four Points (8 April 1965)

1. Recognition of the basic national rights of the Vietnamese people: peace, independence, sovereignty, unity, and territorial integrity. According to the Geneva agreements, the U.S. must withdraw from SVN all troops, military personnel, weapons, dismantle all U.S. military bases there, cancel its military alliance with SVN. The U.S. must stop its acts of war against NVN.
2. Pending peaceful reunification, while Vietnam is still temporarily divided into two zones, the military provisions of the 1954 Geneva agreements must be strictly respected. No foreign military bases, troops, or military personnel in either territory.
3. Internal affairs of SVN must be settled by the South Vietnamese people themselves in accordance with the NFLSV program, without any foreign interference.
4. Peaceful reunification of Vietnam is to be settled by the Vietnamese people in both zones, without any foreign interference.

IV. South Vietnam's Four Points (22 June 1965)

1. Subversion and military activities undertaken, directed and supported by outside forces must cease. Communist puppet organizations in SVN must be dissolved. Communist troops, political and military cadres must be withdrawn from SVN.
2. SVN must be left alone, to choose and shape for itself its own destiny.
3. When aggression has ceased, GVN will ask friendly countries to withdraw their forces from SVN, subject to recall in case of renewed aggression.
4. Independence and liberty of Vietnamese people must be effectively guaranteed.

V. Ambassador Goldberg to UNGA (22 September 1966)

1. U.S. wants a political, not military, solution to the Vietnam conflict.
2. Reunification should be decided through "free choice by the peoples of both North and South without outside interference."
3. U.S. remains ready to negotiate with Hanoi without any prior conditions.
4. U.S. will order cessation of all bombing of NVN the "moment we are assured, privately or otherwise, that this step will be answered promptly by corresponding and appropriate de-escalation on the other side."
5. U.S. does not intend to establish a permanent military presence in Vietnam; U.S. is ready to withdraw its forces as others withdraw theirs.

VI. Manila Six Points (25 October 1966) as announced by GVN

1. Cessation of aggression.
2. Preservation of the territorial integrity of South Vietnam.
3. Reunification of Vietnam.
4. Resolution of internal problems.
5. Removal of Allied Military Forces.
6. Effective guarantees.

VII. U Thant's Three Points (20 April 1966)

1. The cessation of the bombing of North Vietnam.
2. The scaling down of all military activities by all sides in SVN.
3. The willingness to enter into discussions with those who are actually fighting.

NOTE:

North Vietnam's four points were the subject of further comment by (a) NVN Premier Pham Van Dong in an interview with Harrison Salisbury carried in the 4 January 1967 issue of the New York Times and (b) NFN chief diplomatic representative in Western Europe, Mai Van Bo, in a talk to French and foreign correspondents in Paris on 5 January 1967.

Dong's statements are judged by State to be only minor variations on old North Vietnamese themes. Previous statements have suggested Hanoi has two preconditions for talks: (a) cessation of the bombing and (b) US willingness to talk to the NFL as an independent entity. Hanoi has never stated clearly that acceptance of the points is a pre-condition for talks. What Hanoi has said is that the Four Points are the only correct basis for settlement.

Bo's statement was that if the U.S. stopped the bombing "definitely and unconditionally;" the Hanoi Government would "examine and study" US proposals for negotiations. He further stated that the U.S. "could not hope for reciprocal action of any sort."